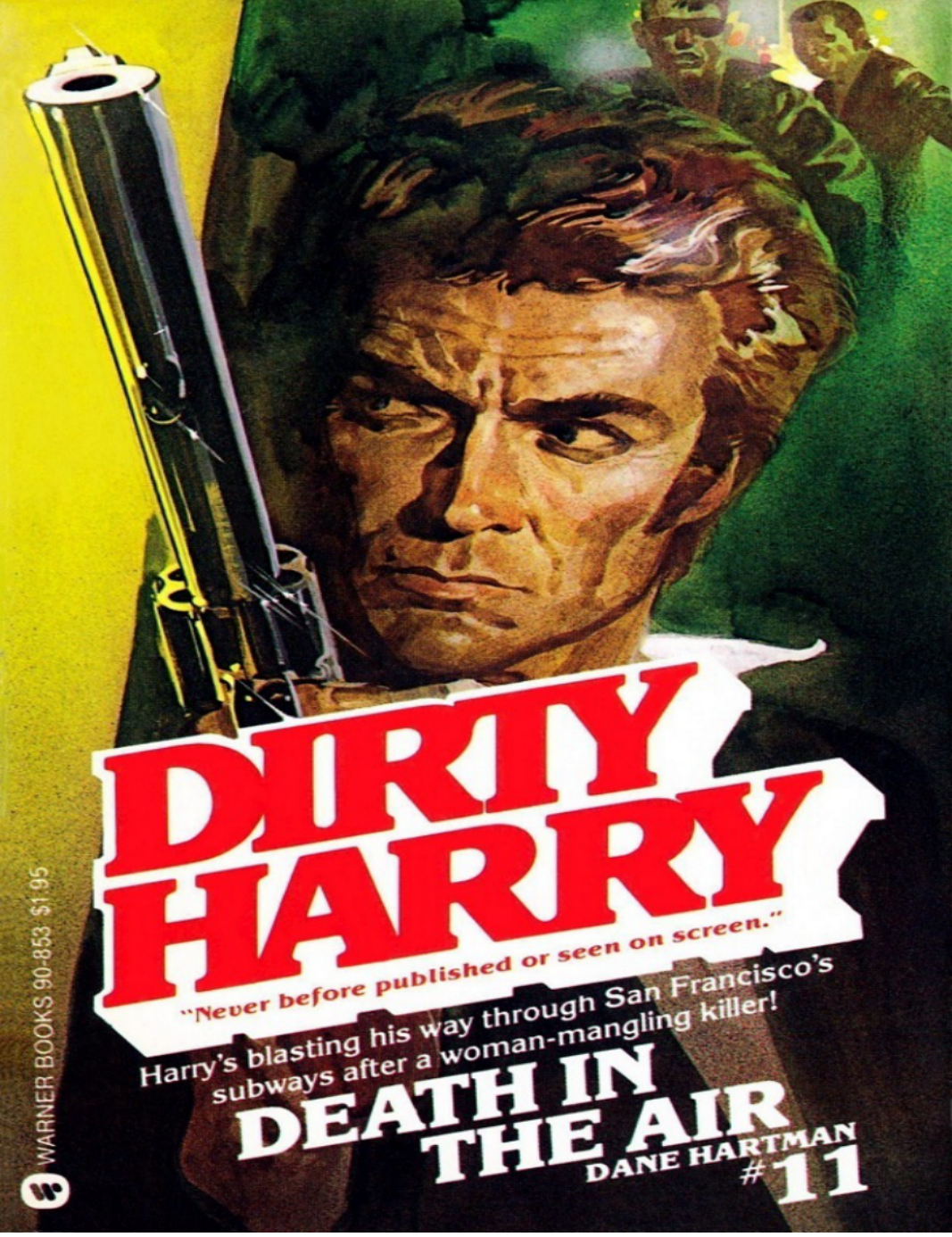
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RUSHING TOWARD DEATH

The killer came up right behind Denise Patterson just as the train rushed into the mouth of the BART station. He wrapped one arm around her waist, and with the other hand around her neck, he started walking purposefully to the edge of the subway platform.

Harry pulled out his Magnum, pointed it at the ceiling like a starter's pistol, and pulled the trigger.

Like a thunderclap, the explosion of the .44 drowned out the din in the station. The killer turned and saw Harry. But that didn't stop him. With all of his strength, the killer threw Patterson onto the tracks.

Harry had no choice. He jumped off the platform, onto the tracks, and raced toward the woman—and right at the on-rushing train.

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DIRTY HARRY #11

Death In The Air

Dane Hartman

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DIRTY HARRY #11

DEATH IN THE AIR

CHAPTER

One

The girl's body was torn apart as if she were a goldfish whirling in a blender. Her flaxen hair had fluttered in the air as she fell screaming onto the tracks. Her arms looked as if she were trying to fly, as the BART car bore down on her.

There was no screeching of brakes and clatter of ancient metal machinery, as there would have been in almost any other major city's subway. San Francisco's BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT system was sleek, efficient, brand new, and, in Martha Murray's case, deadly.

As the train swept into the Fulton Street Station at over forty miles an hour, the high school girl didn't have a chance. Despite waving her arms, she couldn't keep her feet from hitting the ground, and the monstrous train from coming on.

At first, it seemed as if she were trying to keep her balance for a last-ditch attempt at hurling herself away from the speeding vehicle. But then her knees buckled, putting her into a crouched position, as if she were praying to the looming transport.

Her arms continued to flutter, as if she were weakly motioning for the BART train to stop or float above her, somehow. And it wasn't as if the trainmen didn't try. The fact was, there were no trainmen to try. BART was fully automated, which didn't help the girl one whit. The braking process was already in effect, and there was nothing anyone could do to stop the process.

All eyes were on the horror-frozen girl as the train's lights spread across her, outlining her in a white blaze before her form slipped between the glowing orbs a split second before they connected.

Her screams were cut off by the sickening, swatting crunch of the car smashing into her. Her classmates cried out in shock and horror as her broken body was hurled forward by the blow, only to tumble in front of the moving train once again, farther down the line.

Almost all of the bystanders turned their heads from the sight, but there was enough time for one man to see the once-pretty girl's body collapse in a flattened, torn, bloody heap in front of the braking vehicle—her eyes still horribly open. He watched with a certain perverted satisfaction as the train then went on to hit her a second

time.

This time its speed had been reduced enough so that she wasn't catapulted forward, but dragged beneath the spinning wheels. The bottom of the head BART car slammed into her chest, bending her back at an unnatural angle, and then her form was beneath the bullet-shaped transport. The sight of her ultimate fate was cut off from her friends and the innocent bystanders.

All they heard was the sound. No amount of sobbing could cover the sound of her body being shredded by the spinning technology. It was a wet, cracking, tearing noise that sent several of her classmates reeling back, their half-digested lunches splattering on the clean, slick platform walls and floor.

* * *

Along the edge of the platform were several people who fainted from shock, others who couldn't take their eyes off the blood-flecked base of the BART, and one who surveyed the scene with a warped enjoyment.

It had started off badly. He hadn't meant to push the pretty blond girl at all. He had initially targeted a plain, mousey, brown-haired student who clutched her books and flute case to her chest as if they would have run away if she had loosened her grip. But, in the ever-undulating throng of chattering students, the girl had been jostled aside just as he moved in. His hand had pushed soundly into Murray's back as he timed the train's entrance perfectly.

It was definitely a mistake, but not one they couldn't use to their advantage. At least, that's the reasoning he'd use with his masters when he made his report. After all, his instructions had been to choose an uninteresting victim. But the prevailing order had been even more pressing. Another had to die today.

The man made his way to one of several Fulton Street exits just as one door on the stalled train slipped open and another man in a beaten leather coat and scuffed, brown jeans stepped out. He was a tall man, his face lined, and his brown hair swept back. He had been stretched out on one of the BART's seats, his long legs protruding into the aisle, his arms crossed over his chest, and his eyes closed.

When the tall man heard the computerized train grinding the innocent girl beneath its unfeeling wheels, he had reacted as if he had been shaken out of a fitful sleep, as if he had been expecting something like this all along.

But that wasn't because, like the first man, he had some hand in the

murder. It was because he was familiar with tragedy, horror, and death. He had long ago come to accept the fact that he was a natural magnet for trouble. When he was stirred from his rest by the sodden thumping beneath the car, he merely opened his eyes, struggled to a full sitting position, leaned forward, and said succinctly, “Shit.”

He got up, made his way across the carpeted floor to the panel beside the sliding door, opened it with a quarter from his pocket, and pulled the lever. One of the two connecting doors opened a crack, allowing him to slip his fingers in and push the obstruction aside.

What he couldn’t see completely through the car’s tinted windows was all too clear to him now. He started to move toward the front of the train when a transportation official cut him off.

“Stay on the train, please,” the official said hurriedly, not looking the man in the eye. “Please remain seated on the train.” The transport man put his hand on the tall man’s chest, feeling the greasy consistency of his jacket and the strength of the chest beyond. Then the official noticed that no matter how hard he pushed, the man didn’t budge.

Looking up, the official saw an open billfold. On one side was a badge numbered 2211. On the other was an ID labeling the pushee as Inspector 71 of the San Francisco Homicide Department: Harry Callahan.

After Dirty Harry had moved purposefully through the throng to where the stationmaster kneeled, and had seen what looked like a cut-rate dissection, his laconic expression hardened into stony determination that bordered on hate.

He looked down the length of the sleek metal BART snake to see if it could have been possible for the victim to have accidentally danced across the platform and onto the sunken tracks. From where he stood, it appeared that, with all the safety devices the Transportation Board had installed, the victim would have had to impersonate Peter Pan to fly that far.

The stationmaster looked away from the shredded corpse, his skin ashen, with tinges of green around his eyes, nose, and mouth. Martha Murray had been torn open like a package of Poppin’ Fresh dough. Her guts were splashed around like spilled taco filling, and spread around beneath the car.

The stationmaster was surprised to see the inspector, but there was recognition in his eyes as Harry stared unflinchingly at the girl’s remains.

“Callahan,” the stationmaster croaked, “don’t you ever sleep?”

The man's attempt at levity fell, bruised, to the crimson-streaked tracks. Harry finally removed his eyes from the rent body and clamped them on the nauseated trainman.

"Not on the subway," he said. "Not when things like this are happening."

CHAPTER

Two

Harry didn't like the new San Francisco subway. He didn't like any subways. Where there were subways, he figured, there would be crime. Even if those subways were well appointed, sumptuously carpeted, and slickly designed. When you put a hole in the ground, and stuck people in it where no one could see them, it wouldn't be long before the rats came out.

And it wasn't. BART had opened in the early seventies, and, as the decade crept toward its middle, the usual problems arose: graffiti, at best, and mugging murders, at worst.

Graffiti the TB could handle. That wasn't a disease—that was a problem for the Transportation Board. The mugging problem was Callahan's job. As a cop, even when he was in disguise, undercover, Harry still carried his badge. And one or two other things that made this assignment easier.

No, Harry didn't like the subway, but he was used to it. He had to be, since that was where he had spent most of his evenings for the last week and a half. Originally, the BART system had closed at midnight, but the pressure from club patrons and theatergoers pushed closing time first to one and then to two in the morning.

If the Transportation Board had its way, that closing time would be pushed back as soon as possible, but the workings of city government were laborious. The state representatives argued that the needs of the people must be met, while the Board contended that the few people out at two in the morning could take a taxi.

Sandy Richards learned the truth of the Board's argument the hard way. In the middle of November, she had stayed late at a downtown office finishing up some transcriptions for a well-paying, high-powered client. The temperature was brisk, and rain was coming down in cold, slicing sheets. The second-to-last BART run was practically empty except for Sandy, a town drunk, and five fairly well-dressed young men.

The secretary had cast a leery eye at the inebriated man who sat slumped in the train seat, but she remained in the car because of the other group. She felt safe with the five reputable-looking, college-age

kids. After all, she knew she was a young, attractive woman dressed in a smart suit, riding alone at night. She was aware of the possibility that she might be robbed, accosted, or even worse.

She was. Her body was found at the base of Telegraph Hill, in the shadow of the Coit Memorial Tower. Her pocketbook and most of her smart suit were missing. She lay among some overturned garbage cans, where two curious kids had found her. She had been raped and beaten to death.

At her place of business, her boss had spoken glowingly of her to Harry. According to the boss, she had been the model of efficiency. Why, she had even completed some very important paper work the night of her death. The man had been so impressed, he held up the stack of transcriptions for Harry to see.

On the basis of his own experience in putting together a report, Callahan figured she couldn't have gotten all of that done on a nine-to-five shift. As far as he was concerned, that placed her at large in the city after working hours. And, since he knew her office was in Garfield Square, across the city from where she had been found, Harry traced the various ways she could have gotten from one place to another.

The bus and cab driver interviews turned up nothing, so Callahan turned his attention to the BART workers. It was just this kind of tedious, futile investigation that turned police officers into jaded, pessimistic people. Callahan had had his share of dangerous thrills during his career, but most of his time was occupied with just this sort of garbage collecting.

Only this time, the bull-shitting paid off. One BART driver remembered a woman matching Sandy Richards's description riding the train on the day in question. From there, Harry decided to find that run's regular riders for further elaboration. With Ted Huxley, the BART drunk, he hit pay dirt.

Ted was a good old boy who came west to find his fortune. But so did a lot of good old boys, and while some of them had the right stuff to make a success of it, Huxley wasn't able to make the grade. The drop was steep and long, and Ted ended up right where Harry found him.

He was tall and gaunt, but extremely observant for a souse. He remembered the girl, he remembered the five young men, and he remembered that the half-dozen people got off together at the Washington Square stop. Unfortunately, the drunk's words wouldn't hold up in a court of law, so Harry made the man a deal.

Callahan gave him enough stool-pigeon money for booze and a decent place to hole up in, so Huxley wouldn't have to hang out in the

subway. Then Harry took over his spot. The inspector visited the Salvation Army, selected the worst-looking and worst-smelling clothes he could handle, and, for the next ten days, became a sloshed fixture on the last BART morning runs.

His timing was impeccable. For, while Huxley remembered the five youths well, the five youths remembered him only vaguely. It wasn't surprising that the young men mistook the staked-out Harry for the bombed-out Ted, given their similarities.

In mid-December, Harry was slumped in a seat on the late-night BART train, his worn leather collar covering most of his face, and a ratty slouch hat covering his head. Through the crack between the top of the collar and the bottom of the hat rim, he saw five well-dressed young men get on the nearly empty train at the Market Street stop.

As the smoothly running transport picked up speed on its way to Oakland, the bunch of guys checked out the surrounding cars with a few furtive glances, and then came over to where Harry was sitting. Callahan saw that they were the only ones in the section.

"Say, old man," said the first youth, a slender, brown-haired fellow in designer jeans and a V-necked sweater. "How you doing tonight, huh?"

From the way he stood, right in front of the supposed drunk, and the way his friends spread out to block the entry and exit doors on either end of the car, Harry figured his well-being was not their first concern—contrary to the lead's words.

One kid, a short, broad guy with dirty blond hair, leaned against the door to the next car, which was on Harry's right. Another—a guy who looked like a front end for a college football team, complete with a crew cut—went to the other end of the car and stood before the opposite door, which led to the next section.

With those portals covered, another pair of young men sandwiched Harry between them. One stood to his left, and the other sat next to him on his right. The standee was a handsome, rugged sort, who looked incomplete without an ascot and pipe. He wore a casual, fashionable suit with thin lapels, a thin collar, and a tie. His black hair was cut and styled short, and he had the sultry, pouty look of an overgrown preppie. The sittee was a thin, nervous, ferret-eyed type in a baseball jacket and sneakers, who had patches of acne scars across both cheeks.

Harry heard the swooping sound of the train dipping into the entrance to the tunnel which linked San Francisco with Oakland across the Bay. It was the longest underwater transit tube in the world, which made this part of the ride lengthy, and uninterrupted by

stops.

It was what the five had been waiting for. With no more pedestrians coming on or getting off, they had the drunk all to themselves. The various stationmasters had been informed by the SFPD about Harry's assignment, so they wouldn't roust him, but the trainmen wouldn't be able to help Harry now. As usual, the cop was on his own.

With the city lights cut off by the BART's entry into the submerged tunnel, the train's recessed lighting cast an eerie, pale, blue and beige glow over everything. The five young men shifted about in the weird illumination like skittish fish.

"Hey, you remember us, old man?" the lead, brown-haired youth asked, trying to peer through Harry's sartorial obstructions.

"It makes no difference," the nervous one next to Harry said abruptly. "You know that."

"We can't take the chance," the good-looking one said slowly. "I thought we all decided that before we came back here."

That was enough for Callahan. His hunch had been correct. Worried that the drunk might remember and finger them, they had returned to check it out. But, also worried that the drunk knew, but was playing dumb, they had decided to play it safe and get rid of him. They figured that no one would think twice about the murder of an old drunk.

"All right, all right," the lead man complained. "I just wanted to make sure, that's all."

Actually, the kid had cold feet, Harry figured. That put Callahan's benefit of doubt on the brunette's side. He wouldn't kill him unless he absolutely had to. But, from the way the others were approaching it, their exit from the human race might be reason to celebrate. Not surprisingly, they were all talking as if the old drunk wasn't even there.

"Don't worry about it," the football player called from the other end of the car.

"Nobody's going to miss him," the blond at the nearest door hissed. "Get it over with."

The hesitant brunette looked to the handsome standee. He, in turn, looked to the nervous ferret and nodded. The sitting one nodded back, his eyes glowing, and he removed a switchblade from his baseball jacket pocket.

What they were planning was simplicity itself. A long, thin blade shoved up between the drunk's ribs and the old man would be quietly, almost cleanly dead within seconds. Then the five would simply

wander off to other cars. The corpse would remain sitting. By the time the run ended, and his death was discovered, no one would have the slightest idea who might have killed him, or why.

But Harry had some ideas of his own.

He heard the knife open rather than saw it. He didn't have time to see it if he was to get to the end of the line alive. He had to use the fact that the five thought he was a bleary-brained, near-paralytic. He also had to use all of his props.

Harry gripped the top of the booze bottle in the paper bag on his lap with his left hand. He jerked his right hand forward as he swung the glass container up while kicking out.

His sweeping right fist collided with the kid's knife hand, driving the blade away from his side and into the kid's thigh. At the same time, the thick, green sour mash bottle slipped out of the rumpled brown paper bag and smashed across the good-looking guy's face. Finally, his foot hit the lead brunette's family jewels.

In one move, Harry had evened the odds considerably. Like most young, middle-class sadists, the nervous kid with the knife really didn't know what pain was, so when his nerve endings started sending hysterical messages of anguish from his thigh to his brain, he completely overreacted. Grabbing his thigh, he slipped from the seat to the carpeted floor, howling.

The sour mash bottle all but ruined the handsome one's possible modeling career, the heavy glass spinning across his ripped skin like termites going to work on a wooden foundation. His arms went up, useless to prevent the shredding, and he slammed solidly against the sealed sliding doors behind him.

The brunette did what almost anyone kicked in the balls would do. He doubled over, his hands covering the damage, his face purple, and his mouth frozen in a high-pressured round O. His eyes moved wildly, trying to take in his friend's plight before his pupils teared. Harry waited until the youth closed his eyes before standing and driving his fist into the unprotected face.

The brunette snapped to attention like a recruit on his first day at boot camp. His tortured expression became blandly peaceful, and then he fell swiftly back, his hands at his sides. He collided with some seats across the aisle, thus interrupting his perfect backward plank drop.

"Police," Harry managed to say. "You're all under arrest." He had his hands full with the blond who came charging to his associates' aid as soon as the supposed drunk showed teeth.

The blond tried to tackle the cop, but Callahan utilized a classic

shoulder throw, dumping the kid onto the floor in front of him. He looked over the flipped kid to the last man. Much to his shock, the football player had produced a snubnosed revolver from his waistband.

Harry did what any red-blooded American cop would do in such a circumstance: he ducked behind the dazed blond kid. He heard the nasty little gun fire with a sizzling crack, and heard the bullet thud into flesh behind him. He glanced up to see that the switchblade kid had managed to stand, pull the knife out of his leg, and stumble within striking distance.

The thirty-eight-calibre bullet put an end to the kid's pained attempt. When Harry ducked, the lead dug into the youth's chest, scrambling everything just below his sternum. The bleeding hole in his thigh was joined by a fountain of drooling, crimson liquid pumping out from between his stomach and his chest.

The kid's mouth opened in surprise, he blinked, all expression of suffering left his face for a second, and then he died in anguish. Amazed by the sudden death of his friend, the football player wrenched open the connecting door behind him and ran for it.

Harry pulled out his gun as he rose. The blue steel Smith and Wesson model twenty-nine .44 Magnum gleamed in the BART light. The flipped blond started to get up in front of it just as the glass-torn, black-haired man tried jumping Callahan from the side.

Harry brought the butt of the weapon down on the top of the blond's rising head, as he dug the fingers of his left hand into the cut guy's face. The blond hair sprouted several red strands as the Magnum-made slice in the kid's skull spit blood and he stopped rising.

Harry then pushed the once-handsome, black-haired man away from him. Callahan slammed the suspect against the subway car's wall. The guy's face seemed to be slipping between Harry's fingers, as if his visage was made up of bloodworms. The kid whined in torture. Harry was about to let up on him when he remembered how Sandy Richards looked half-naked among the garbage at the bottom of Telegraph Hill.

"How does it feel, punk?" Harry asked the squealing kid.

Callahan purposely squeezed the man's ruined face. The black-haired man fainted from the pain. The cop immediately released him, hopped over the prone, pistol-whipped blond, and went after the gun-toting football player.

He found him in the last car just as the BART train swept out from under the Bay and into Oakland. The lights from that city made a

backdrop for the tableau of the muscular blond holding an old lady in front of him for protection as he stood framed in the window of the rear door. The other three passengers looked on in amazement.

"Don't come any closer, cop," the blond punk warned stridently, "or I'll blow her brains all over this car!"

Harry stood in the middle of the section, his big .44 still pointing at the two standing people. The old lady was frightened enough by the initial attack, but when she saw the Magnum, she nearly swooned in shock. The brawny football player kept her sagging body upright.

"You already have one murder against you," Harry reminded him flatly. "With the right lawyer, you might be able to beat that rap. Ain't no way you're going to see anything but stir if you kill that lady in front of all these witnesses."

The brawny survivor of the preppie rapist-murderers looked wildly around. "I'll kill all of you," he announced. "I'll kill you all and then get away at the next station."

Callahan interrupted the short cries of fear from the trio of innocent bystanders. "That's a .38 Special," Harry told him with slow purpose. "You don't have enough ammunition to kill everybody."

Harry watched in satisfaction as the guy glanced at the snubnose in confusion. He was anything but professional. He probably didn't even know what kind of gun he was using. All he knew was that he was one tough, gun-toting hombre, who carried around the guilt of gang-raping a secretary like a Boy Scout badge of merit. He made Harry sick, so the cop wasn't averse to rubbing it in a little.

"I know what you're thinking," he said. "You're thinking, does this .38 take five or six bullets? Well, in all this excitement, I kind of forgot myself. So, now you've got to ask yourself a question. Do I feel lucky?"

Harry raised his heavy revolver, the barrel seeming to glow in the train compartment, until it was level with the last guy's head.

"Well?" he asked. "Do you, punk?"

Before the football player could make a decision, the BART train rounded a left corner at forty miles an hour, causing the car to lurch. Everyone was thrown to the side. In order to keep his balance, the man had to drop the nearly unconscious lady. He twisted as he fell so he could keep the snubnose pointed at Callahan.

Harry fought gravity enough to keep from sliding into the right wall, but he let his feet slip out from under him. He landed on the carpeted floor sideways, his own gun still aiming as well.

He waited while the surprised gunman instinctively pulled the

snubnose's trigger while trying to regain his balance. The bullet plowed into the floor two feet in front of Harry.

"Drop it," Harry warned.

He rolled over to the left as the kid pushed himself away from the wall and fired again. The bullet hit an upright on a window frame, cracking the glass and ricocheting into the ceiling.

"Give up!" Harry yelled in anger, unable to fire back until he was sure he wouldn't hit any of the others. He pushed off from the opposite wall and got up on one knee as the train straightened.

The kid had planted himself in the middle of the car. He saw Harry rising, the Magnum steadying as he came up. In panic, the football player squeezed off two more shots. The first smacked into the floor between Harry's foot and bent knee. The second ripped through the side of Harry's loose drunk's jacket.

"That's five," Harry shouted, adding the bullet which had killed the kid's knife-wielding friend. "Quick, does it have a sixth chamber? Take a guess, punk."

The football player gave his answer by pulling the trigger one last time. As the .38 hammer clicked on a spent shell, Harry shot back. The .44 slug grabbed the killer by the chest, picked him up, and threw him against the rear door. The combination of the shell's point-blank power and the guy's weight sent him through the glass. He somersaulted backward out of the car, and tumbled brutally onto the BART tracks as spinning hunks of tinted window fell like jagged snowflakes around him.

All that remained of the man, in the BART car, was the snubnose, which had flown out of his hand and clattered onto the floor. Harry holstered his own smoking gun and rose. He walked between the stunned passengers, one of whom was tending to the old woman. He leaned down and picked up the gun he had immediately recognized. It was a Charter Arms Undercover .38 Special.

"Colts are the ones with a six-round chamber," he told the night beyond the broken window, as he opened the snubnose. "Charter Arms has five." He clicked the weapon shut. "Only five."

CHAPTER

Three

The operation took a while to clean up, but the mop-up officers were used to that by now.

"Sorry," the Inspector said to one of the officers pulling the various dead and wounded bodies out at the Oakland BART stop.

"That's okay," a plainclothesman said with a smirk. "When we get the word that Dirty Harry's on a job, we put the meat wagon on twenty-four-hour standby alert."

Callahan sighed and looked out over Oakland and Alameda. The sun was just coming up, tracing the horizon in thick tones of blue and red. Harry looked and knew he wouldn't sleep for several hours yet. There was still more to do. Only after he joined the Oakland officers for a little talk with the BART fight survivors was he able to get back on the Oakland-San Francisco run for a subway ride home.

It had all come out at the hospital. The boys had prowled the nights looking for "fun" until fate intervened and delivered Sandy Richards into their hands. She had thought that, by going with all of them, she'd be safe on her trip home. They had thought that she, by refusing to service them for the favor, wasn't being a good sport.

Naturally, they didn't mean to kill her. Between the youths forcing themselves on her too hard, and her fighting back too much, something snapped. The accident didn't make her any less dead, and the guys' reaction wasn't any less criminal.

Harry was ruminating on the new generation's amoral stupidity when Martha Murray was thrown into the BART people-processor below the train.

Callahan turned away from the pale stationmaster and vaulted back to the Fulton Station's platform just as a group of trainmen rushed to their boss's aid.

"Seal off the entrances and exits," Harry instructed them quietly. "Put a seven-fifty into Homicide headquarters at the Justice Building."

The stationmaster swallowed. "There's no need for that, is there, Inspector?" he asked hopefully. "This was just an accident, wasn't it?"

Harry kneeled at the lip of the platform so that no one but the

transportation boss could hear him. “She would have had to do a double somersault just to get to the edge,” he said. “I’m handling it as a homocide until we find out whether she was suicidal.” He got up and faced the other trainmen. “Go to it.”

They all looked at their shaken boss on the tracks. He nodded. They went to it. The stationmaster awkwardly pulled himself back to the platform. Harry was too busy surveying the crowd to help him. The BART boss finally got to his feet, wheezing, next to Harry.

“You don’t think this had anything to do with the two other pushing incidents this past month, do you?” he asked the cop, with more concern over the threat of scandal than the loss of young life. Although he was still unnerved, he had relegated the formless corpse below the train to the very back of his subconscious.

Harry kept his eyes on the milling, upset crowd while he blew on his fingertips. “I hope not,” he said to himself. “This city has enough drug pushers. We don’t need a subway pusher.”

With that, Callahan began circulating around the platform, looking at every person. By the time he reached the midway point on the platform, one of the trainmen returned with a uniformed San Francisco officer in tow.

“This is the guy,” the trainman said to the patrolman.

“I recognize him,” the uniformed cop replied, snapping off a salute at Harry. “All the exits are covered as you ordered, Inspector.”

“To our knowledge, no one’s gotten out,” the trainman pitched in.

Just then, the increasingly surly captive crowd surged aside to allow a television camera crew to get by. Complete with an on-the-air reporter, cameraman, and soundman, the unit was filming wildly, trying to get to the head of the stalled BART train. Harry looked meaningfully at the trainman.

“Well,” the embarrassed transportation man drawled. “I said no one had gotten out. I didn’t say anything about getting in.”

But Harry and the patrolman had already moved forward to cut the television crew off before they could film Murray’s remains. Callahan’s appearance before them was reason enough for renewed celebration. The reporter immediately recognized the inspector, and just as quickly assumed that the death was a homicide.

“What can you tell us about the murder, Inspector?” the reporter demanded, as Harry and the uniformed cop halted their forward progress.

“It’s a death, that’s all,” Harry said tiredly. “I was just coming back from Oakland when it happened. That’s all I know, so far.”

That wasn't enough for the reporter. "Do you think this is connected with the two other BART pushings in the last month?" he pressed. "Was this victim a young girl, just as those two were?"

"We're still investigating," Harry announced, beginning to move the television crew back.

"Well, how long is this going to take?" an angry businessman interrupted. "I see no reason why we should be kept here while you clean up the mess. We've got jobs, too, you know."

As soon as he started complaining, the camera swung in his direction, which didn't stifle his "righteous indignation." Harry saw that he was in a no-win situation. No matter what he said to the press or to the impatient businessman, the police could be made to look incompetent. He decided that honesty, in this case, was the best policy.

"Someone has died a brutal, ugly death," he told the interrupting man flatly. "We can't act as if nothing has happened."

"I can understand that," piped up a middle-aged woman who had been listening, and who moved in from where she was standing against the wall. "But do we have to be kept down here? It's so cold. Look," she continued, holding up her hands, "I've already started to get frostbite."

Sure enough, the tips of her wrinkled, gnarled fingers were the pasty-white color which came when blood didn't reach the extremities. Callahan suddenly became aware that his own fingers were cold—that was why he had unconsciously blown on them earlier. There was a strange chill in the air down here. Even though it was mid-December, the San Francisco season was such that the temperature rarely sank below fifty-five degrees. Even the Oakland night air was mild compared to the chill of the Fulton Station.

There was a general murmur of agreement from everyone nearby about the cold and about the unfairness of keeping them all stuck underground. To keep their minds off their captivity, Harry instructed the patrolman to start collecting each witness's story. If anyone saw more than the girl falling, he wanted to know about it.

The Inspector continued to work his way down the line, preoccupied with looking at every person on the platform. But try as he might, he couldn't get rid of the reporter, who tagged along behind him like a pet dog overly proud of his talent for heeling.

"How do you feel about this death, Inspector?" the reporter asked with a straight face—seemingly trying to get "up close and personal" in his reporting. When Harry didn't answer, the man tried again,

holding his microphone up as if he were checking Callahan for radioactivity. “Do you feel that subway crime is on the upswing? Can we expect a rash of criminal activity on the BART system?”

As the reporter’s voice droned on, Harry looked ahead, seeing a plain, brown-haired girl standing at the very edge of the platform. She held her books and musical instrument case tightly, as if they were beloved friends. Her eyes were cast down, and she seemed intent on examining the tips of her penny loafers. Harry began walking in her direction.

“What action can we expect the police department to take in these matters?” the reporter asked, as Harry picked up speed.

The reporter tried to keep up, but it wasn’t long before Harry was going as fast as he could without running. He was almost on the very edge of the platform, so there was nothing between him and the plain-looking girl.

The reporter slowed, and watched in amazement as Callahan bore down on the oblivious schoolgirl. Just as it seemed that Harry would run right over the girl, a small, dark figure, who had been hiding behind the girl in the shadows, suddenly bolted in the opposite direction.

The reporter’s amazement grew to confused awe as Harry instantly changed direction and took off after the mysterious man. Callahan’s quarry slipped in between the other people on the platform like some sort of weasel.

Just as the man got to the base of the stairs, Harry unsheathed his .44 cannon. That was all it took. The sound of the big gun being emancipated from its special, leather holster was a noise the slippery man recognized. In the enclosed environs of the subway platform, the sound reverberated loudly.

Not only was the sound enough to slow the man down, it was enough to get all of the bystanders between Harry and his target out of the way. They pushed themselves away from the tall cop in the ragged clothes as if he were a leper. They seemed to melt back into the walls, leaving a clear shot from Harry to his quarry. If there was any doubt in that quarry’s mind about his predicament, Harry put an end to it the next second.

“Stop,” was all Callahan said. It was enough. The man froze, his hands straight up in the air.

“Turn around,” Harry said. The man complied, slowly. His pinched, angular face held an expression of whimsical embarrassment, as if the whole thing were a mistake. But his strict posture revealed that the

hands-up position was one he was all too familiar with.

The uniformed patrolman who had been collecting evidence ran to Harry's side, his own .357 drawn from his holster. As soon as he saw Harry's prisoner, his mouth stretched into a knowing smile.

"Well, if it isn't Marshall Maggin," he said. Maggin shrugged. He didn't bother to say anything, because clutched in one of his upraised hands was a woman's pocketbook. And, unless he was coming out of the closet in a big way, he was literally caught red-handed.

The patrolman holstered his weapon, moved forward, and plucked the pocketbook out of the greasy man's still upraised hand. He tossed the purse to Harry and told Maggin to "assume the position." Maggin immediately spread his legs and leaned against the wall.

While the uniformed cop searched the thief and then cuffed him, Harry checked out the contents of the purse. Inside was a tiny, blue makeup case, a round tin of imported hard candy, a packet of Kleenex, and a wallet. Inside the wallet were two dollars and thirty-seven cents, a fuzzy, wrinkled photo of a young man in jeans and a numbered jersey, a ticket stub from a Civic Center concert, and a yellowing Social Security card.

The name on the card was Martha Joan Murray 546-894-5062.

CHAPTER

Four

The man who had pushed Martha Joan Murray to her death placed the clear, plastic scrambler device over the mouthpiece of the pay phone in the Abbot's Bar booth.

He did most of his pay phoning at Abbot's, because it was one of the few places left in the city that actually had a phone booth. Almost everywhere else, there were these naked pay phones attached to the wall, with no privacy.

Here he could disappear into the dark recesses of the thick, wooden walls, and if he switched off the dim, yellow light, almost no one outside could see him. And, thanks to the television set over the bar, and the usual volume of booze-lubricated conversation, no one could hear him, either.

He dialed the necessary number, waited until the ringing turned into a high computer tone, and then dialed another five-digit number. Then he listened to the silence on the line until a voice answered.

"The job is done?" It was not surprising that there wasn't a hello. Only the killer had the use of this line. He also didn't waste time trying to recognize the voice on the other end. It was being disguised automatically.

"Yes," the pusher replied. Even though the scrambler altered his voice so that even if he were being recorded no one could match his tonal patterns, the man on the other end recognized something different in the way the killer answered.

"Anything else to report?" he asked cautiously.

The pusher told him about the sudden change in victims, the appearance of the homicide inspector, and the subsequent arrest.

"Who is this inspector?" the man asked.

"The stationmaster called him Callahan," the pusher replied. There was a short pause, on the other end.

"Could this Maggin have seen anything?" the other voice finally said.

"I can't make any guarantees," the pusher replied. There was another pause, during which the killer smiled. He had already guessed

what his superior's reaction would be. He had initially dreaded making the call, because it had appeared that his usefulness to the Program was at an end. But now, with the intervention of the thief and the cop, the killer could still accomplish some good.

"We cannot afford to take chances," the man on the other end said. "We shall see what the computer comes up with on Maggin and Callahan. Wait thirty minutes, and then return to your office. Instructions will be waiting for you there."

"Very good, sir," said the killer. "Thank you, sir."

The killer hung up, removed the special mouthpiece, left the booth, and had lunch at the bar. Afterward, he leisurely made his way back to the run-down, four-story brick building in the shadow of the Bay Bridge. As he walked up the warped steps to his second-floor office, he heard the comings and goings of the buses at the nearby Bay Bridge Terminal through the dirty, smoked windows.

From all appearances, his office was exactly as he had left it. In fact, even his crude security device—the hair he had glued to the edge of his closed, locked door—was still in place. But when he unlocked the door and entered the simple, windowless, corner room, there was a bulky manila envelope on the large, chipped, wooden desk that hadn't been there before.

The killer closed and locked the door behind him. He walked around the desk once before sitting in the one padded, metal chair. After making a rudimentary, almost unconscious examination of the envelope to make sure it wasn't a letter-bomb, he opened the package.

Inside was a thin, small hypodermic gun with a metal vial screwed into it. The only other thing was a coded message written on flash paper. The killer translated the complex code into a simple message.

Maggin would be taken to the hospital. He wasn't to leave it alive. If Inspector Callahan could have an accident in the process, all the better.

The killer leaned back, producing a thin lighter from his pocket. With a touch, a small flame appeared. Like a practiced magician, he barely touched the edge of the paper with the flame, and the message disappeared. Only a single tiny ash fell to the desk. That was why they called it flash paper.

The killer nonchalantly wiped the ash away and leaned back, smiling.

Halfway to headquarters, Maggin started getting a serious case of the shakes.

“Aw, shit,” said the uniformed patrolman who had identified the pickpocket in the first place.

“What?” Harry opened one eye to ask, remaining slumped in the passenger seat.

The patrolman hooked a thumb toward Maggin, who vibrated in the caged back seat. “Marshall must’ve lifted the pocketbook to get money for a fix,” the cop replied. “It looks like he was too late.”

Harry sat up and looked over his shoulder. Sure enough, Maggin was showing the unmistakable signs of a loser on withdrawal.

“We’re never going to get him back to the station in that condition,” the uniformed cop, who had introduced himself as Jim Petrillo, said. “Any lawyer worth his salt could make a case for ‘cruel and unusual punishment’ if we bring him in like that.”

“Head for the hospital, then,” Harry suggested, hunkering back down in his seat, trying to catch one wink, let alone forty.

“I guess well have to,” Petrillo agreed. He took a fast right off of Market Street, away from the Justice Building, and onto Tenth—toward San Francisco General Hospital.

As the patrol car sped south, Callahan thought about what Petrillo had told him. Maggin was a well-known purse snatcher, pickpocket, and small-time thief in the precinct. Petrillo himself had arrested Marshall at least twice, and almost every beat walker had a Maggin story to tell back at the locker room.

But because of the insanity of the legal process, Maggin was still waiting for the third delay on his first rap trial to clear up. And while he was waiting, he was out committing his second through twelfth. Harry’s arrest was Maggin’s thirteenth rap, and Petrillo hoped it would be the guy’s unlucky one. Maybe now, the patrolman figured, they could make a case for Maggin being an undesirable, and get him exiled to Angel Island or something.

All Maggin himself had to say, however, was that he knew nothing, saw nothing, and did nothing but pick up this pocketbook which was lying on the platform with no owner. He didn’t know this Murray girl, and he didn’t know that what was left of her was under the BART train. He had come in after the subway had run her down.

Callahan knew he would have to hold off rest for a while longer, since they were heading for the hospital. At least back at his office he could catch some Z’s at his desk or curled up on Lieutenant Bressler’s couch. No such luck at S.F. General, unless he wanted to be mistaken for a patient.

“Hand me the radio, will you?” he asked the patrolman, without

opening his eyes. He felt the mike being put into his outstretched hand. Since patrolmen had been reduced to one to a car in an attempt at economizing, Petrillo didn't mind Harry's company or demands.

Callahan got a clear channel to Homicide and asked for Sergeant Frank DiGeorgio. Soon, his longtime backup man got on the line.

"I thought you'd be back home and in bed by now," the heavy, Italian police vet greeted him.

"Don't rub it in," Harry replied. "I'm in car number—" He looked at Petrillo.

"Seventeen," the cop informed him.

"—Seventeen," Callahan continued, "heading for the emergency ward at S.F. General."

"You all right, Harry?" another voice asked with concern. Callahan recognized the rough tone of his immediate superior.

"I didn't know you cared, Lieutenant," he told Bressler. "Yeah, I'm fine. We just got a package of cold turkey in the back of the car here for delivery."

"So what's the call for?" Bressler asked. "We know you don't need a chaperone."

"I need DiGeorgio to meet me there with the files from this BART thing," Harry replied.

"Yeah," said the Sergeant. "I heard about Fulton Station, already. That's tough, Harry. It's the third accident, but the first death."

"That doesn't mean it was murder," Bressler interrupted. "Let the detectives handle it, Harry. That's their job. I need you back on the Goldfarb bust."

Hiram Goldfarb was a Hassidic Jew who was also one of the best jewelry men in the state. That didn't keep him from winding up on a morgue slab, however, with two and one-half million dollars worth of diamonds missing. Bressler had gotten a line on his killers, but he wanted an experienced homicide team in on the arrests in case of trouble.

"That ready to go yet?" Harry inquired. He had started the subway stakeout only because the Goldfarb thing needed some more legwork done.

"Soon," Bressler promised.

"All right," retorted Callahan. "In the meantime, give DiGeorgio the files and have him meet me at the hospital." Without waiting for a reply, Harry signed off, hooked the mike back in place, and leaned back.

Petrillo smirked, shaking his head in amazement. “Like pulling teeth to get anything done around here.”

Without opening his eyes, Harry replied, “Just remember that, and you’ll go far. Always keep your pliers nearby.”

San Francisco General Hospital was a venerable institution which had had several modern additions built onto it—looking like black-glass leeches sucking up to classic stone.

Patrolman Petrillo followed the labyrinthian arrows which led them to the emergency entrance, where he and Harry unloaded a positively quaking Marshall Maggin. Maggin had already chewed his lower lip into bloody pulp, and he was groaning as if all his bones had suddenly sprouted thorns.

“I can take it from here, Inspector,” Petrillo assured Harry. “I’m used to it. You can wait for your partner at the front desk.”

Harry thanked him and started on his way to the lobby. He got lost twice in the maze of different-colored corridors with different names, so, after he reached his destination, it was only a few minutes before DiGeorgio appeared through the revolving doors. The stout, crew-cut partner was glancing at a stapled stack of papers in his hand.

“You’re in luck, Harry,” he said. “Second victim was Betty Ann Lowry. She managed to jump to the other side of the tracks before the train got to her. She couldn’t say whether she was pushed or fell. She had just come from a long lunch period of playing handball, and was feeling pretty weak. Anyway, she was treated for a bruise or two, and then released.”

“I don’t feel any luckier,” Harry retorted, in slight confusion.

“The first victim wasn’t so lucky,” DiGeorgio went on. “Although she was far luckier than that girl this morning. The fall broke her leg. She still managed to pull herself into the space between the train and the platform. She was brought here for treatment. I called up right after I got off the radio with you. She’s still here. She’s being discharged from treatment today.”

Luck stayed with the two homicide cops as they went up to the patients’ private rooms and found the first victim packing her bags. Harry had read what they had on her on the way up in the elevator. Name: Denise Patterson. Age: thirty-two. Height: five feet, six and one-half inches. Weight: one hundred and eight pounds. Hair color: light brown. Eye color: hazel.

She was just as impressive in person as she was on paper. The report didn’t describe her intelligent face, strong body, or fashionable style. She wore tan slacks, a maroon turtleneck, and a zip-up jacket.

The first sight Harry had of her was from the rear, but that view was impressive enough. She was one tightly-packed lady, with no visible panty lines. He could see her musculature work slightly as she crammed the various clothes, magazines, and books into her overnight bag—remnants of a long hospital stay.

When she turned back toward her closet, she was initially surprised by the appearance of two men in her doorway. Her attractive face was framed by a mane of shoulder-length, wheat-colored hair, but her expression was one of concern.

"Can I help you?" she said slowly, hex voice strong and low.

"How's the leg?" Harry asked.

She looked down at the shapely limb in the well-fitting slacks. "Fine," she said with slight hesitation. Then, taking a flippant attitude, she cocked her head and said, "Who wants to know?"

"Excuse me," Callahan said with a smile, remembering that he was still wearing his slightly odorous drunk's outfit. He reached into his back pocket, and, for the second time that morning, showed his identification.

Surprisingly, Patterson reacted to the Inspector's badge with visible relief before returning to her packing. She acted as if DiGeorgio didn't even exist. It was obvious that Callahan was in control here.

"I didn't know regulations had allowed your uniforms to get so . . . casual," she said, taking a satiny, beige nightgown and a dark-green velour robe out of the closet.

The sensuousness of that uniform was not lost on Callahan, who couldn't help mentally picturing the woman in the outfit.

"I just came off of an undercover assignment," he told her, as she folded the bedclothes on top of the other stuff. "Patrolling the subways," he finished, seeing her flinch ever so slightly.

A second later, her stiffened shoulders relaxed, and she continued her actions as if nothing had happened.

"I've already told many other officers what happened," she said, her back to them. "I don't see how it will help to go over it all again."

"I came off the undercover assignment just as a girl was run over by a BART train and killed," Harry interrupted.

When she turned back to them, her face was as pale as the stationmaster's had been. It could have been that she was so sensitive that the news shocked her, Harry reasoned—or it could be something else entirely.

"Killed?" Patterson breathed. "How horrible."

“Her name was Martha Murray.” DiGeorgio spoke up for the first time. “She was a high school student taking music lessons at the University. Did you know her?”

“No,” Patterson said, after some thought. “No, I didn’t.”

“I saw a picture of her, back at headquarters,” DiGeorgio continued. “You two looked similar enough to be sisters.”

“Really?” the woman replied. “That’s a coincidence, isn’t it?”

“We don’t know yet,” Harry said meaningfully, taking in the information. “But we thought we had better see you.”

“Of course,” Patterson agreed. “But I’m sorry. I’ve never heard of Margaret Murray before.”

“Martha,” DiGeorgio corrected.

“Martha, was it?” the woman echoed, sitting down on the edge of her bed. “I’m sorry. It’s just . . . it’s just such terrible news. Oh, that poor girl . . .”

Harry looked at his partner with concern. When he glanced back at Patterson, he saw that she was preoccupied with blowing on her fingertips. He had just enough time to realize that the chill in the subway wasn’t in evidence here when he heard the distant, popping sounds coming from down the hall.

His head swiveled on his neck like a sensitive radar dish. Anyone else might have disregarded the noises. To Callahan, it was the unmistakable sound of gunfire—distant enough not to have the angry cracking, but not far enough away to be in another building.

“Holy shit,” DiGeorgio said succinctly, realizing the same thing. Without offering any kind of explanation, the two men raced down the hall, trying to trace the sounds to their origin.

By the time they reached the center of the floor, the main nurse’s desk was already in tumultuous activity. Meanwhile, the gunshot sounds continued. Harry grabbed one of the scurrying nurses by the arm. “Where is that noise coming from?” he asked the wide-eyed girl.

“Surgery,” she gasped. “Down in the new wing.”

As the nurse slipped out of Callahan’s grasp, DiGeorgio was already flashing his badge and getting detailed directions from the flustered desk nurse. The two men took the stairs down several flights until they reached a locked basement door. They could hear the gunfire coming clearly from the other side.

“Is it worth it?” DiGeorgio asked.

“It’s worth it,” Harry answered, already backing up.

The Sergeant's Ruger Police Service Six revolver came out of his belt holster. Standing to the side of the door, he blew the knob and lock off. He did it from the side, because he didn't want one of his .357 caliber loads accidentally hitting an innocent bystander.

As soon as the metal knob had clattered to the floor, Harry moved forward, drawing his .44 Magnum and pulling at the broken door. Just as he pulled it open, the body of a wounded black intern fell face-first from the other side onto the stairway floor.

"Christ," DiGeorgio exclaimed in surprise, automatically leaning down to check on the man's condition.

While he was doing that, Callahan stepped around the bleeding man and plastered himself against the left frame of the open door, his gun up. He hazarded a look around the corner. All he saw was a long, thin hallway made up of reinforced cinder blocks occasionally interrupted by windows. At the far end of the hall, he saw the back of a uniformed patrolman kneeling behind the corner.

Harry looked back at DiGeorgio. "It wasn't my bullet that did this," the Sergeant reported. "He was shot high in the back."

"Get to a phone and make sure police back-up is coming," Harry instructed. "I don't want hospital security handling this alone."

He didn't wait for a reply before turning the corner and running down the hall. He kneeled down next to the patrolman, who reacted to his appearance with a start. Harry looked into the face of a surprised, sweating Jim Petrillo. The next thing he noticed was that the cop's holster was empty, and that the gun wasn't in his hand.

"What happened?" Callahan demanded.

"I don't know!" Petrillo practically wailed. "One minute he's got the shakes—he can't walk, he can hardly talk—the next minute he's running around like Tarzan!"

Callahan looked around the left-hand corner to see another long corridor with two hospital workers huddled behind a vending machine while a security guard lay motionless, face down. The gun was missing from his holster, too.

"Explain," Harry said tersely.

Petrillo calmed himself with an effort. He breathed deeply several times and swallowed. "Okay," he said. "I carry Maggin to the emergency ward. He's so bad off he can't even stand. They stick him into an examining room with a bunch of doctors, nurses, and interns, and they ask me to wait outside. I figure that's all right, because the junkie wouldn't get five feet in his condition. Inspector, I've seen addicts before. I know faking when I see it, and Maggin wasn't faking.

He was gone!"

Harry had seen addicts, too, and he had to agree with the patrolman. Either Harry was more tired than he thought, or Maggin was a superb actor.

"All right," he concurred. "What happened then?"

"So all of a sudden, he comes tearing out of the examining room like a banshee, slugs me, grabs my gun, and goes running. I took off after him, but now he's moving like O. J. Simpson. I get him cornered down here and he starts shooting."

Harry looked around the corner again. The hall was beginning to fill up with thin, white smoke, and the gunfire had ceased. Replacing the shots, however, was a crackling hum.

"What's that?" Harry wanted to know.

"You got me," Petrillo answered.

"Stay here," Callahan commanded. "Wait for the cavalry. I'm going to get those people out of there."

Again not waiting for a reply, Harry moved down the hall in a crouch, his Magnum up and ready. The thin plumes of smoke stung his eyes and nostrils, but he made it to a position behind the vending machines without incident. But when he placed a hand on the shoulder of a kneeling nurse, he was rewarded with a shriek. The doctor in front of the girl turned at the sound.

"Oh, my God," he said.

"Police," Harry told the terrified duo, cursing his misleading disguise. "Get back around the corner. I'll cover you."

"We can't leave him in there," the doctor said stridently.

"We're not going to," Harry promised. "But we can't have any more injuries. Now get going."

The nurse was more than pleased to slink out of the way, but the doctor wouldn't budge. "You don't understand . . ." he said. He was interrupted by the appearance of Marshall Maggin two doorways down, brandishing two revolvers.

"I saw that!" Maggin screamed, pushing the guns out before him and pulling the triggers. The bullets whined off the cement walls and slammed into the candy and beverage machines, putting holes in eight packages of Doritos and springing a leak in the Welch's grape-soda tank.

As the beverage dispenser began spitting carbonated water and bleeding purple syrup, the nurse cried in shock and fell in the hall. Petrillo grabbed her arms and dragged her around the corner as

Maggin disappeared back into the room.

"Get the hell out of the way," Harry warned the doctor as he moved forward.

"Wait!" the doctor cried, as Callahan silently hopped over the guard's prone body and flattened himself against the opposite wall. "Please," the doctor pleaded.

Harry looked back at the man's desperate face. "He's in our most technically modern operating room," the doctor stressed. "There are literally millions of dollars of delicate equipment in there."

"That's not going to buy these men's lives back," Harry said, motioning to the still security guard.

"But it can buy many others' lives back," the doctor countered. "Please, please be careful."

Callahan continued through the smoke, noticing out of the corner of his eye that Petrillo was moving forward to collect the distraught surgeon. Harry slid along the opposite wall until he was right outside the operating room Maggin had holed up in.

"Come on, Marshall," Harry called. "You're only making things worse."

He was answered by several bullets slamming off the door frame. But the junkie was cunning enough not to show himself so that Harry could bring him down.

"You're running out of bullets, Maggin," Harry continued, undaunted. "It's only a matter of time."

This time, the answer was a hysterical laugh. "You think so?" Maggin's screeching voice asked. "Then come get me, pig. I've got something waiting for you."

Harry mentally counted the rounds the creep had used so far. He and DiGeorgio had heard at least four. The one that felled the intern made five. The security guard made six. The vending machines took at least three more. The operating room entrance took two additional bullets. And, as far as Harry knew, Maggin only had Petrillo's and the security guard's six-chambered revolvers.

That left the junkie with either one slug left, or possibly none, if Harry hadn't counted right. It was worth a small risk to nail the obviously crazy guy.

Harry steeled himself, and then jumped into the operating room doorway on one knee, his Magnum thrust out in front of him. He had just enough time to see Maggin standing over a naked body on an operating table and fooling around with some sort of crane, before he

was knocked aside.

The Inspector fell over to the left, regaining his balance a second later. He spun to see that Petrillo had, for some reason, dived forward and pushed him out of the way. The patrolman remained crouched in the doorway for a moment, saying, “It’s a—”

Then his arm flew up and his legs straightened, throwing him back against the wall. He smashed into it solidly, then slid down to sit on the floor, looking like a thrown rag doll. His eyes were open, and he had a stupid, open-mouthed grin.

But while Harry watched, a thin, red line appeared in the middle of his face—as if an artist had drawn a vertical line from his brow to his lower lip. Then the line started to drool red ink. It wasn’t long before the blood was bubbling from behind the razor-thin cut, making a pool inside his shirt.

“It’s a laser!” The doctor completed the message for the dead Petrillo from the other side of the hall. “We use it for cataracts and cancer operations.”

“Why didn’t you say so in the first place, you asshole!” Callahan shouted angrily from the other end of the corridor. “I don’t give a fuck about million-dollar equipment, but this is a killing machine!”

“No it’s a lifesaving machine,” the doctor wailed. “It’s only powerful enough to make a shallow incision—no deeper than a scalpel!”

“Deep enough,” Harry yelled, waving his Magnum at the patrolman’s corpse. “Can you pull the plug on it?”

“It has its own power supply,” the doctor admitted.

“Wonderful,” Harry said to himself. And who knew when that power supply would run out? At close range, Maggin might be able to make confetti out of them all for days to come. “Who is that in there with him?” Callahan asked the doctor.

“That’s Mr. MacCurdy,” the surgeon replied. “We were removing some nodes from his vocal cords when this crazy man burst in. If we don’t get back in there soon, he’ll die from choking on his own blood.”

There seemed no way around it. Harry would have to race into the face of a death-ray if he didn’t want a drawn-out hostage negotiation process. By then, MacCurdy would already be dead, anyway. Harry tightened his grip on his Magnum and prepared himself.

“What are you going to—!” said the doctor, just as Harry ran forward into the operating room.

His timing couldn’t have been better. Maggin, in his maddened state, had been listening to the hallway conversation closely, so when

Callahan moved in the middle of the doctor's question, the junkie wasn't prepared to act. Harry twisted to the side, trying to get a clear shot at the nut without hitting the overheating laser scalpel or the prone patient.

That gave Maggin enough time to grab the cranelike laser barrel and swing it over at Harry. The Inspector didn't see anything, but he felt a slicing pain across his right arm. That wasn't enough to make him drop his gun, but it was enough to throw off his aim.

When his finger pulled the Magnum's trigger, the bullet smashed into the right side of Maggin's pelvis, folding the junkie in two. Maggin collapsed, his scream of pain drowned out by the .44's roar. A moment later, both were cut off.

When Maggin fell, he didn't release his grip on the laser. He had pulled the device right across the top of his own head. The hardly visible beam of concentrated light sliced through his skull bone as if it were rice paper, and through his brain as if it were bread pudding.

Harry stayed exactly where he was, and yelled for the doctor. "Get the hell in here and turn this fucking thing off!"

The nurse and the surgeon ran into the room and tended to their patient and to the machinery. Quickly following was a small army of security guards and police, including DiGeorgio. Callahan was nursing his cut arm by moving it around.

"Where's Patterson?" the Inspector asked quickly, almost ignoring the confrontation which had just occurred.

"I don't know, Harry," DiGeorgio said in amazement. "Checked out, I suppose. Gone."

"Well, check it out," Callahan said irritably. "I want to know where she lives and works."

The Sergeant let the harsh words roll off his back. He had known Harry too long to be surprised by anything. "While I'm doing that," he recommended, "I suggest you get checked out by Doctor Rogers back at headquarters." With that parting advice, DiGeorgio left to do what Callahan had told him to.

Harry followed shortly after, but not before he had turned to the surgeon, who was toiling quickly over patient MacCurdy. "He'll live," the doctor announced.

"He won't," a security guard said of Maggin.

Harry shook his head and walked to the operating-room door. He took a last look at the smoky chaos and shook his head again.

"Better dying through science," he muttered.

CHAPTER

Five

"Amazing, really amazing."

Doctor Steve Rogers was spending more time marveling at Callahan's wounds than repairing them. Finally, Harry had stripped off the decrepit Salvation Army jacket and shirt to find that each had a perfect, thin slice in the sleeve. Just beneath that was an equally thin, perfect slice in Harry's right arm.

"You're incredibly lucky, Inspector," the black police doctor commented as he looked at the surgical cut from almost every direction.

"So what else is new?" Harry said, with drawled impatience. It was hard for him to take Rogers's comment seriously, considering the number of wounds his battered body had already sustained in his career—not to mention the fact that he had stared down a laser to get his latest marking.

"Really, I mean it, Harry," Rogers continued, not picking up the cop's sardonic tone. "Since the condensed light hit your arm, it was no worse than getting a shallow knife slice. But if it had hit any part of your upper torso or face, forget it."

"All right, already, enough with the examination," Harry declared. "Just wrap the thing up and get out of my way. I've got work to do."

"Not so fast, Inspector," Lieutenant Bressler said from the door of the first-aid cubicle on the seventh floor of the Justice Building. "I think you deserve a little R and R after your performance at the hospital today."

Harry looked from Rogers, who was rummaging around a standing medicine cabinet for some gauze, a bandage, and Mercurochrome, to the dark-haired, ruddy-faced Bressler, who stood in front of DiGeorgio in the door opening.

"Thanks, Lieutenant," he said, "but something smells about this whole Murray murder, and I don't think I could sleep very well with the stench still in my nostrils."

"Death," Bressler hastily corrected. "The Murray death, Harry. And if there was any foul play involved, I think you tied that up neat and

clean back at the laser operating room."

Rogers concerned himself with wrapping the Inspector's arm while Harry cocked a suspicious eye at his superior. "What do you mean by that?"

"Just this," Bressler said easily, coming into the room. "What reason would Maggin have for suddenly going crazy? The way we figure it is that he knew that he pushed the Murray girl . . . and maybe the two other girls as well."

"Who's 'we'?" Harry asked cautiously.

The Lieutenant's face became an expressionless mask. "The San Francisco Police Department," he said blankly.

"How do you figure?" Harry pressed skeptically.

"All right," Bressler admitted affably. "So maybe he didn't push the Murray girl. Maybe he was trying to snatch her purse and she fought back too hard. Maybe, in the scuffle, she slipped and fell."

"Petrillo . . ." Harry began. "The late Patrolman Petrillo interviewed many of the witnesses," Harry continued. "No one mentioned a scuffle of any kind."

"They also made descriptions of everyone from a black man with a ghetto blaster to a sinister Oriental with a scar, standing behind the girl," DiGeorgio said uncomfortably.

"You must know from experience that we can't depend on eyewitness descriptions, Harry," Bressler contended. "The only thing that makes any sense is that Maggin figured he had nothing to lose when he went berserk in the hospital. He figured that it was only a matter of time before we nailed him on the Murray thing."

"And what about the other two pushing incidents?" Callahan inquired as Rogers finished up on his arm.

"We're looking into that," Bressler said, his eyes veiled. "But you know as well as we do, Harry, that those incidents could be totally unrelated to this one. And this one is the most important. This one resulted in a death."

"Ahem," interrupted Doctor Bogers. Everyone looked at him. "I'm all through here," he reported. Turning toward Harry, he continued, "I wouldn't recommend you do any shot-putting with that arm for the next few days." Turning toward Bressler, he finished up. "If you require my services any further, I'll be down in the lab. Good day, gentlemen."

Bressler waited until the doctor had left the room before turning back to Harry and slapping, then rubbing, his hands together. "Well,"

he exhaled. “You heard what the doctor said, Inspector. Why don’t you take the rest of the week off and go home for some much-needed rest until we need you on this Goldfarb thing, eh?”

Without waiting for an answer, Bressler left the room, his desires known. Harry looked pointedly at DiGeorgio, who looked back with worried skepticism. Both had worked under the Lieutenant long enough to read him like a mediocre police-procedural novel.

“The Lieutenant’s sphincter seems tighter than usual,” Harry commented, still sitting shirtless on the first-aid table.

“Um,” DiGeorgio agreed. “Lots of the editorial ‘we’ in that speech.”

“Sounds like he’s been getting some pressure from on high,” Harry surmised.

“That’s the bad word going around the office, all right,” the Sergeant agreed.

“Well,” Harry concluded, “if I’m going to get all this bed rest, I suppose I’ll need to get dressed.”

DiGeorgio was way ahead of him. Holding up a finger, he stepped outside and started producing clothing from atop a file cabinet. “A seven ninety-nine dress-shirt special from Penney’s from your left, bottom drawer,” he narrated, throwing Harry the light-blue shirt still heavily pinned and in its plastic wrapping. “A sleeveless, red V-necked sweater from your locker downstairs,” he continued, while tossing, “and your well-worn, light-beige corduroy jacket from the hat rack in your office. What the well-dressed police punching bag is wearing today.”

Harry smiled while slipping into the clothing. “Okay, so where does this Patterson woman live?” he asked lightly.

DiGeorgio grimaced. “I was afraid you’d remember that,” he admitted. “Don’t you think it would be a real good idea to leave this one alone, Harry?”

“You saw how she reacted when I mentioned the subways, Frank,” Callahan retorted. “And you, yourself, mentioned the similarity between the way she and Martha Murray looked.”

“Yeah,” DiGeorgio countered, “but the first girl was not a good-looking blond—she was an ordinary-looking, black-haired girl. And her having bad memories about the subway is no big deal. She fell onto the tracks, remember? That would put anybody off BART travel.”

Harry still wasn’t convinced, but he couldn’t quite tell his partner why. He didn’t think he could explain the connection between the girl blowing on her fingertips in the hospital room and the chill he had felt in the Fulton Station—at least not in a way that wouldn’t make him

seem overworked.

"Her address, Frank," he said simply.

Callahan couldn't bring himself to do it. No matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't bring himself to go to Patterson's address directly from police headquarters. He could feel his brain turning to mush. There was just no benefit in going over there if he was unable to put a coherent sentence together.

Realizing that, Harry's first stop was his third-floor apartment on Russian Hill, where he fell into his unmade bed without undressing. He fell asleep immediately, and woke up a little more than six hours later, his cut arm aching and his empty stomach growling with a vengeance.

His second stop was Jaffe's Kwik Lunch, his favorite hot-dog hangout, which stayed open for the dinner as well as the midnight-snack crowd. The place hadn't changed very much since the time Harry had had his lunch interrupted by a bunch of bank robbers down the street during the Scorpio Sniper investigation. He had broken up the heist with six shots of his .44, then he had gone back to finish his frankfurter.

The only major change had come in the form of three video game machines stuck in the back corner, where a regular crowd of acne-ridden adolescents with excellent hand-eye coordination congregated. They never seemed to go to school or stay home.

"Economics," Jaffe had explained. "They play a game, they buy a hot dog. They buy a hot dog, they play a game. To tell you the truth, I make more on the machines than I do on the wieners."

"So why don't you turn the whole place into a pinball parlor?" Harry had irritably suggested.

"Because of you, Harry darling," Jaffe had whispered. "Only because of you. Now will that be a lunch Callahan special or a dinner Callahan special?"

A lunch special was one dog, while a dinner special was two. This night, Harry ordered a dinner, complete with fries, coleslaw, and a large milk. He watched the kids racking up millions of points on "Qix," "Ms. Pac-Man," and "Centipede" while he waited. While he ate, he blessed Jaffe for keeping the volume turned down on the sound effects, at least.

It was late in the evening by the time Harry got to Patterson's address, but he was feeling fairly human by that time. It was a nice four-story apartment building near Grand View Park, just across the

way from the Shriner's hospital. Entering the well-lit but narrow foyer, he checked the buzzers until he saw the tag saying "4-B: D. Patterson." He pressed the button, hoping that she was home—for more than interrogatory reasons. He liked the way she looked. And there would be nothing he would like better than to find she had had nothing to do with the Murray killing.

The speaker crackled, and he heard her distorted voice asking, "Who is it?"

"Inspector Callahan," he replied. "The policeman you met at the hospital today."

After a long pause, the door buzzer sounded, and he was let in. He walked up the long and winding carpeted staircase, to find Patterson waiting for him in the doorway of her apartment. Hers was the second of only two apartments on that floor.

D. Patterson was wearing faded jeans and a V-necked sweater. There was no shirt under the sweater, and only thick socks on her feet. Harry was extremely impressed with his own taste. Had she not been part of the case, he would have faked evidence to make her a part.

"Inspector Callahan?" she said skeptically. "I wasn't expecting to see you again."

"Our talk was interrupted," Harry reminded her.

"Even so," she countered, "I thought you might at least wait until business hours."

"We couldn't find your place of business," Harry said honestly. As much as DiGeorgio had tried, he had come up with zilch. "Besides, I thought it would be best if we talked when I wasn't smelling of bad hooch."

"Yes," she agreed, taking in the brown wool slacks, maroon sweater, and tweed jacket he had changed into after waking. "That's much better. Won't you come in, Inspector?"

"Don't mind if I do," Harry answered, following her lead.

The apartment immediately opened up on a combination living and dining room with a three-paned bay window across the far wall. Harry could see three more doors to his left. He assumed one led to a kitchen, the next to the lav, and the last to a bedroom.

The living room proper was handsomely appointed, with thick Oriental rugs on the shiny hardwood floor, a decorator couch, a large color television, an impressive stereo system in its own free-standing cabinet, a fine dining room set, and a border of flowering plants hung around the bay window. Whatever Patterson did for a living, she made more than the average secretary or teacher.

“Make yourself at home, Inspector,” she said breezily, heading for the far-left door. “Can I get you anything? Coffee? Tea?”

“No thanks,” Harry said, standing amid the tasteful splendor of her place. “But it won’t be easy for me to make myself at home. What do you do for a living? Rob banks?”

There was silence from where Harry had correctly guessed the kitchen to be, until Patterson replied with sweet suspicion. “Is that your clever way of sugarcoating a third degree, Inspector?”

“Not especially clever,” Harry countered, sitting down on the beige couch. “What do you do for a living, Ms. Patterson?”

Patterson laughed as she came out of the kitchen with a large, steaming mug of coffee. “Why, ‘Ms.’, is it?” she exclaimed. “You must be one of these new liberated policemen, Inspector.” She sat at the head of the dining table on the other side of the television. She looked at him with calculating but inviting eyes from over the cup’s rim as she sipped.

Harry sighed and leaned forward. “I’m investigating the death of a high-school girl,” he said plainly. “Now, she might have fallen on the subway tracks, or she might have been pushed. Now, you might be adjusting to the shock of her death, or you might be trying to avoid answering my questions. So, again. What do you do for a living?”

She didn’t have a chance to answer.

Harry was considering standing up and walking toward her, but he decided against it. That decision saved his life. It was someone’s bad aim that saved hers.

Callahan saw the glint and heard the click at the same time. He could have ignored one or the other, but not both at the same time. His Magnum was magically out of its holster and in his already pointing hand when one of the panes of the bay window cracked, and Patterson’s coffee mug shattered into dozens of pieces.

CHAPTER

Six

The Magnum .44 roared with deadly rage.

The center pane of the bay window exploded outward, revealing what the blinding reflection of the living-room lights had covered before. There was a man in a black suit, his face covered with a dark mask, hanging by a system of cables outside of Patterson's apartment.

Callahan's bullet not only destroyed the window, but smashed into the side of the man's chest as well. The man swung outward first, the silenced Remington .308 calibre rifle falling from his quivering fingers; then he tipped over. The waist harness kept him from falling to the ground, but was unable to keep him upright. Harry saw just a glimmer of movement to the assassin's right, but, before he could react, the cracked windowpane to the left exploded inward.

It was too much, too late. There was another hanging killer outside the window with a silenced semi-automatic weapon, but, by the time he started firing, Patterson had already fallen back and had ducked under the thick table. His rapid-fire, high-calibre bullets rattled ineffectively into the apartment's walls.

Callahan threw himself forward, rolled to the left, and came up firing. The .44 bucked twice, but the Magnum slugs failed to silence the chugging weapon outside the window. Its target merely changed from Patterson to Callahan.

Harry fell flat on his face as the enemy's bullets tore into the television and the couch back. He spun onto his back when he heard the apartment's own door being smashed open. By the sound of it, whoever was coming in had no thoughts of rescue. The predicament made the cop willing to take a big chance. Simply judging the position of the open door by memory and by the sound, Harry fired a fourth .44 slug through the couch.

He was rewarded by hearing someone grunt and fall back against the wall. Then, the sofa was all but obliterated by the renewed crashing of high-powered automatic weapons.

Harry took the few panicky seconds he had to drop the two remaining rounds in his gun, as well as the spent shells in the chamber, and to jam in six new rounds with a speed loader. He

couldn't risk facing whoever these attackers were with only two live bullets in his gun.

He took advantage of his position by blasting up from the floor toward the doorway. It was easier for him to hit his mark at that angle than it was for the men crowded in the opening to shoot down at him with the furniture in the way.

A moment later, the attackers seemed to realize that, too. They started leaping into the apartment in all directions.

Harry didn't let the sudden change in approach faze him. He relegated the assault to a target practice level. He forced himself to think of these killers on that level so that he wouldn't hesitate.

The first man tried to get past the couch and into the kitchen. Hairy quickly shot him in the head as he sped past the side of the sofa. His forward motion was not stopped, but the power of the .44 added a side kick. The man's skull and brains splashed on the front wall while his body jumped, nearly flipped over, and slid neck first across the living-room floorboards. The spilling blood from his torso left a trail to show his progress.

The second man tried to race along the side wall on the other side of the sofa, laying down a line of fire he hoped would discourage Harry. But, again, the angle was difficult, and his slugs either bit into the floor in front of Harry's feet, or sizzled over his head.

Callahan's shot suffered neither eventuality. He shot between his prone, outstretched legs, catching the second assailant in the chest. The man jumped backward into the wall, and then dropped onto the floor, his blood creating a modern art painting in his wake.

The third man came leaping over the back of the perforated couch, screaming. He landed on top of Harry, grabbing his Magnum hand. Harry was quick enough to return the favor, seeing that the weapon was an Iver Johnson Super Enforcer—a .30 calibre machine pistol only for those interested in doing serious damage.

The two men rolled around the floor between the destroyed couch and the devastated television set, with the masked attacker trying to burst Harry's eardrums with screams and to disembowel him with kicks. Neither man could get his gun within hitting range.

Harry may not have had fire power or savagery on his side, but he did have experience, size, and weight. He was able to hurl the attacker off him.

The man nimbly somersaulted and twisted around, bringing the Super Enforcer to bear. Right behind him, Harry saw the second hanging killer framed in the shattered window, another Iver Johnson

death machine cradled in his arms.

He didn't bother to sit up. He saw his opportunity, and he took it. Lying upside down on his back, Harry pointed the Magnum at the proper angle and pulled the trigger.

The Magnum bucked and smacked against the floor, nearly jarring out of Harry's hands. But the bullet flew true, going right through the kneeling man's neck and into the chest of the hanging man outside the window.

Suddenly, the chaos-strewn apartment turned deathly silent. Harry stayed where he was for a second, simply listening. The only things he could hear were the hiss of the heating system, the hum of the refrigerator in the kitchen, and a knocking sound somewhere in the distance.

Something was wrong. After a full-scale attack on the fourth floor of an apartment building, he should have at least heard the outraged or terrified cries of the other occupants. Instead, nothing.

Harry quickly got to his feet. Three men were lying in the living room, and three more were around the dining area—two hanging dead outside, replacing most of the plants which had been blown away. The only thing missing besides irate tenants was Denise Patterson.

The cop suddenly identified the distant knocking—the sound of receding footsteps. The woman must've broken from behind the table, when Harry was jumped, and skittered out of the apartment. Either that, or she had been totally annihilated by gunfire.

Harry quickly checked the adjoining apartment rooms: empty. He was just coming back into the main area, looking for a phone to call HQ, when he heard the sound of a car engine outside. He quickly ran to the broken windows, and looked beyond the hanging corpses, where a Continental was pulling out from the apartment's underground garage. As it turned left onto the street, he saw the unmistakable profile of Patterson who was in the driver's seat.

A desperate panic gripped Harry Callahan's brain. Whatever she was involved in, and the reason Martha Murray was killed, went completely beyond some sick pusher's kicks in the subway. He just couldn't let Patterson get away that easily.

Harry knew his and his .44's limitations. To hit the car at this distance would be a matter of luck, not skill. The Magnum was best at short range.

But the Iver Johnson Super Enforcer was another ball of bullets. It, too, was better at short range, but it had thirty rounds in its long

magazine which could be spat out at a rate of three hundred rounds a minute.

Harry scooped the weapon out of a pool of blood on the floor and aimed it at the speeding car. The first bullet burst tore up the asphalt a few feet short of its goal. That gave him the range. The next burst was right on the money. He jerked the coughing gun so that the bullets ran right alongside the rear bumper and then dug into the white-walled radial tire.

The Continental jerked, jumped, and then the right rear scraped along the road, twisting the car to the side before it reached the corner. Callahan didn't wait to see Patterson's reaction. He ran back into the bedroom, leaving the semi-automatic on the floor, and jumped onto the fire escape right outside that window.

Only then did he see the woman pull herself out of the car and look at the flat. She glanced at him leaping down the metal steps, and then ran toward the intersection. Her still-stockinged feet slowed her down, or Harry wouldn't have had a chance of catching her.

As it was, he vaulted midway down the second-floor ladder, falling twenty feet into the apartment house's yard. As he landed and rolled, he glanced back at the lower floors. Lights were on inside the apartments, but all the drapes were closed, and there were no silhouettes.

Ignoring that incongruity, Harry pushed himself to his feet, and vaulted over the nine-foot-high wrought-iron fence which encircled the yard. He landed on the sidewalk and ran into the nearly deserted street. Empty, save for parked cars and Patterson's crippled Continental.

The Inspector raced down the street, to see the woman turn to the right on Kirkham Street. He made it to the corner in record time, only to glimpse her getting on a bus halfway down the block. There was no way he could reach the bus in time, and, with all the other traffic, he didn't dare try to blow out its tires.

But Harry Callahan refused to give up. As he prayed for a little luck, he saw the bus pull out into late traffic, but get stopped a few hundred feet beyond by a stoplight. Harry silently thanked the powers that be for that extra one minute edge, and ran through the traffic with abandon.

He kept twisting and dodging between autos, then leaped on the back of the next car in front of him and started running across the tops of the parked cars.

He jumped from roof to roof until he was in the line behind the bus,

and then he leaped from hood to trunk, suffering the curses of outrage from the surprised drivers.

But luck wasn't with him the entire trip. Just as he got within fifty yards of the bus, the light changed. Oblivious to the chase, the transport took off, leaving Harry behind in a cloud of noxious fumes.

Without pausing, he dropped to the street next to the driver's window of the last car he had landed upon. Brandishing his badge and his gun, he all but wrested the man from behind the wheel of his Toyota.

"Police business," he assured him through clenched teeth.

"But, my car" the bearded, bespectacled man complained. "How am I going to get home?"

"Go to the nearest police station," Harry told him quickly, getting behind the wheel and closing the door on the driver. "Tell them Inspector 71 took your car." Keeping a thumb on the horn, he awkwardly shifted into second when it sounded as if the engine would rip itself apart, causing the auto to jerk its way across the nearly empty sidewalk.

It was slow going, since he had to stop for everyone who didn't get out of the way fast enough, but he was still covering more ground than those drivers on the congested streets. He stayed on the sidewalk until he reached the corner, and then, horn still blaring, he tore out into the four-way intersection. He managed to slip in between two lanes of traffic, but an oblivious driver, taking a right turn, clipped the Toyota across the back, pushing the Japanese car into the parked vehicles at the side of the street.

Callahan was thrown to the passenger seat by the small crash, but he pulled himself upright immediately. The engine had died when the car had slowed while in third gear, so Harry slammed down the clutch and twisted the key viciously to get the thing going again.

The car was instantly revived and lurched forward, the back of the bus looming in the windshield. But, once he reached the bus's rear, he was stuck there. The right lane was completely jammed, and two lanes of cars were streaking by in the opposite direction on his left.

The thought of all those dead men in Patterson's apartment inspired him to even greater heights of reckless, furious courage. Harry pulled the car to the left, trying to find a hole in the oncoming traffic big enough for him to swerve ahead of the bus.

He tried once, nearly getting into a head-on collision with a Mustang. He weaved again, but the Toyota's pickup wasn't fast enough. He had to brake and slip back behind the bus before a Ford

station wagon plowed into him.

The one good thing about his crazy driving, however, was that everyone around him gave him plenty of room. No other driver wanted to be part of the massive pileup Callahan's car seemed to be promoting.

And it wasn't long before the bus driver noticed his insane antics. The bus driver's reaction, however, was to speed up. Almost beside himself with frustrated anger, Harry pounded the Toyota wheel and grunted in pain. He had to stop the damn bus without killing everybody within range, and hit upon an audacious method.

He floored the Toyota's gas pedal, then reached down to grab the hand brake. As soon as he felt enough speed and saw the back of the bus blotting out everything else, he pulled up on the brake lever, and ducked.

The Toyota's wheels locked and squealed in smoking torture as the car smashed into the back of the bus.

Harry was thrown tightly against the front seat, but he had prepared himself well. The seat back held him without snapping any delicate bones. And it stopped the bus. No municipal driver in his right mind was going to roll away from an accident.

Sure enough, when Harry kicked open the car door and dragged himself out, he saw the bus braking and the front door opening. But instead of the driver, out came Denise Patterson.

She took off between cars, as Harry got to his feet to give chase. Only then did the livid bus driver appear and clamp his meaty hands around the back of Callahan's neck.

"You miserable son of a bitch," the driver seethed, surprising Harry with the strength of his grip. "What the shit do you think you're doing? Who the fuck do you think you are?"

The driver had Harry at a disadvantage, to say the least. The cop was intent on where Patterson was heading, but the driver had him in a choking grip. Harry's hands were useless for grabbing the man behind him, so Harry brought all his weight down on the driver's foot.

The man screeched and the neck hold loosened. Harry spun, letting the turn give extra speed to his right fist, which slammed across the driver's jaw. The meaty transportation man went down like a sack of potatoes.

That didn't sit very well with the rest of his passengers. Some street people started getting off the bus with lynching in their eyes. Harry stopped the forward flow by dragging out his Magnum.

"Police business," he spat. "Take care of him," he continued,

motioning to the felled driver as he turned. There was an angry buzzing in his ears. He looked up in time to see a low-flying helicopter. Ignoring it, he turned in the direction he had last seen the woman.

He made it around just in time to see Patterson disappearing into a doorway and down a flight of steps. The sign above the entrance said it all: Lincoln Way/Waller Street Station—BART.

Denise Patterson had gone into the subway.

CHAPTER

Seven

Everything had worked perfectly until after the hospital. But the killer of Martha Murray reported in to his superiors without doubt. He had seen the danger this Inspector Callahan represented, and recommended that the cop be terminated.

But he wasn't making the suggestion out of logic: he was working on a hunch. He had seen Harry close up in the hospital. Determination and ability were written all over the police vet's face. The killer instantly saw that Harry would grab onto a tiger's tail and not let go.

The Program, however, prided itself on its self-preserving decisions based on computer-aided logic. The computers had announced that the Inspector's chances of affecting the Program were a million to one. Harry had beaten the odds. He had survived the hospital horror and showed up where and when it was least desirable.

They should have let me handle the Patterson Operation, the killer thought with pride as he weaved in and out of the late-night crowd. If they had, it wouldn't have been necessary to risk my exposure on this mop-up mission.

The hospital operation had gone perfectly. The killer had merely slipped into Maggin's examining room disguised as an intern—walking right past Patrolman Petrillo—and injected the junkie with the syringe pistol. Maggin didn't complain because he had been told it would make him feel better.

And it did. The laser standoff was an extra which the killer reveled in, but it did not succeed in disposing of Callahan. Afterward, he had all but demanded that the Program directors put a tail on the Inspector, but they had ignored this advice.

They had assured him that pressure was being applied to insure that the police department closed the books on the Murray death, and that Callahan would be shunted to another investigation.

But the killer had seen Harry. He knew, as the Program people should have known, that Callahan would not give up that easily.

The proof came when the Patterson assassination came up. They had set it up to look like a robbery gone sour. But the assassin team had panicked when Harry showed up. They decided, without checking

with the Program, to kill both Harry and the girl quickly with two shots, and then fabricate a logical story on the spot.

No one had expected Harry Callahan to react so quickly and so well. As the point man on the apartment house roof had watched his men being slaughtered by a single cop, he had sent an amazed message to the Program's "eye-in-the-sky"—the back-up surveillance helicopter.

The copter had traced Callahan's actions from that point on while communicating with Martha Murray's killer in his apartment. It was what the killer had been waiting for. He had heard the .44 Magnum shots—he could guess what had happened. After all, he lived downstairs from Patterson in the same building.

Damn their logic and their computers, the killer thought—slipping around all the happy restaurant, theater, and club patrons in his way. If they had only done the job cleanly and quickly in the first place, there would be no need for this.

But then the killer smiled. Actually, he was glad it had worked out this way. It was going to be a rare pleasure for him to push the Inspector's one clue right out from under his nose. Callahan's chance at discovering the truth was going to slip right between his fingers.

And then the murderer of Martha Murray was going to accomplish something the whole San Francisco underworld hadn't been able to achieve in more than a decade. The man called Dirty Harry would die.

The man called Dirty Harry hit the end of the BART platform, shaking. His wounded arm was throbbing, and his legs were vibrating slightly from the strenuous auto chase. Even in the cool night, he felt his shirt sticking to his back. He was definitely getting too old for this kind of thing.

It wasn't just the strain of the gunfight and the running that had done it to him, however. It was what he saw behind the whole affair that really got to him. He could hardly survey the crowded subway platform because of the mental images that kept appearing.

The hospital fight with Maggin and the apartment assault were unlike anything he had ever experienced before. Both had a cold, technical edge that was beyond the capacity of any of the street animals he usually had to contend with.

What did it take to make a nearly dying junkie into a cunning, killing maniac? What did it take to mount an attack on a residential apartment building without attracting anyone's attention? And how in the living hell did it match up with three girls pushed onto the tracks of a BART subway?

These thoughts left Callahan's brain, to be replaced by an automatic buzz. His eyes became a camera, his ears sensitive microphones. His mind told him what to look for. First, an attractive woman without a coat or shoes. Second, a person—it could be a man or a woman—with a certain look.

No matter how good they were at acting, no matter how professional they were, they couldn't disguise the characteristics Harry was looking for. He had seen them in World War Two, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam vets. He had seen them on the faces of the Federal agents he often had to work with and occasionally had to fight against.

What Harry was looking for was the smug, proud, but still vacant look of a person totally committed to one way of thinking. It was the face of a murderous zombie or a homicidal cultist. There was a tension, an aura, around that kind of person.

He didn't see any of these characteristics on the first faces he looked at. He moved slowly, cautiously through the raucous crowd on the platform. The buzz in his mind was almost overwhelmed by the swelling noise of laughter and talk in the station. As he walked, watching everything carefully, he saw the telltale lights of an oncoming train reflecting on a faraway curve in the tiled tunnel. Its approach made his search all the more desperate.

He scanned the crowd almost hopelessly for any sign of his quarry. In his present state of mind, he was worried that he could look right at Patterson and not see her. He. worried that she might have slipped through the throng and run out the second stairway.

But he had practically fallen down the stairs in his rush to get there, and he had kept his eyes on the second stairway. She couldn't have had enough time to fight her way through the crowd and get up the steps. But if he didn't find her before the train came—between all the cars and all the stops—he might lose her for good.

There was a movement in the middle of the crowd. A hand had risen, and someone had blown on his or her fingertips.

He saw them both at the same time. Denise Patterson was hunched down in the thickest concentration of people in the center of the platform. She was looking forward and down, keeping her head low. Coming up behind her was a short, innocuous, rough-skinned man in slacks, a shirt, and a plain sports jacket.

That was the one. Harry was sure of it. He had looked right through the same man at the Fulton Station the morning Murray was killed. And now, the pusher was coming up right behind Patterson, and Callahan was at least thirty feet away.

“Hey!” Harry shouted, but the sound was swallowed up by the sound of the train rushing around the corner, and by the increased volume of conversation. “Hey!” he repeated, shoving his way forward.

All of the actions seemed to be running at a slower, nightmarish speed—the kind of dream speed in which the limbs are moving, but not naturally. Everything was slowed just enough so that it seemed impossible to accomplish anything.

Callahan kept pushing as he watched the killer get behind Patterson, wrap one arm around her waist, the other hand around her neck, and start walking purposefully to the edge of the platform.

Harry saw the horror on Patterson’s face. It was almost a guiltless shock, not the look of a woman who felt she deserved such a fate. He saw her mouth working, but heard no sound.

The train appeared in the mouth of the station tunnel. Already, the crowd began preparing to enter, covering the killer’s deadly approach to the platform’s lip. Harry pulled out his Magnum, pointed it at the ceiling like a starter’s pistol, and pulled the trigger.

The explosion of the .44 drowned out everything else like a thunderclap. The crowd, as one, reacted fearfully to the sudden deafening noise, cowering away from its origin. For a split second, almost all movement stopped.

In that second, the killer turned and saw Harry. He saw the recognition on Harry’s face. He saw that Callahan wasn’t going to be the easy target he had originally supposed. He took a step forward, and threw Patterson onto the tracks with all his strength.

Harry jumped onto the tracks as soon as the killer’s foot moved. He raced forward at the oncoming train with speed he didn’t know he had. Between him and the BART was the groggy, sobbing form of Denise Patterson.

The killer had nearly choked her to death before dumping her with his angry power. The woman didn’t fall to the tracks, she was hurled—crashing to the ground with vicious speed. The knees of her jeans were ripped, and her skin bloody. She didn’t have the strength to get out of the way.

Harry did. The girl was obscured by the powerful beams of the BART headlights as Callahan grabbed her under the arms and leaped upward with all his might. He spun to the left, pulling the woman with him, feeling the train brush his side. It actually slid across his shirt and his pants leg.

His feet were kicked aside only seconds before he felt the concrete of the platform slamming him on the back. The weight of Patterson

was atop him. They had both made it in one piece. He looked down. Their feet were right against the train's side. One of Patterson's socks was missing.

Almost as soon as they reached the platform, Harry slipped out from under the woman and rolled to his feet. His initial gunshot had scattered the pedestrians around him—most of them had fallen to the ground. Still, many remained on their feet, running around, trying to find some sort of hiding place. Adding to the confusion were the pedestrians coming off the stopped BART train, oblivious to the drama that was being played out.

Harry couldn't get a clear shot at the pusher, but the pusher hadn't had enough time to get up the stairs. He had been blocked and accidentally tripped by the scurrying bystanders, so his right foot made it to the bottom step just as Harry threw himself against the platform wall twenty feet away.

No one else was flattened against the wall, but Harry couldn't wait until his aim was perfect. He couldn't risk someone coming down the stairs and appearing in his sights. Callahan snapped off a shot immediately, the bullet sizzling in front of the pusher and shattering against the far stairway wall.

This second shot drove the killer back and flattened almost everyone on the platform. For those who didn't recognize gunfire, it sounded enough like the end of the world to make them drop on their faces. And, those who weren't convinced by the gunfire, Harry took care of in the next second.

"Everybody down!" he boomed, his gun weaving back and forth as he tried to get a bead on the moving killer.

No one asked questions. But, as the people fell, the pusher moved toward the BART train. Harry instantly put another bullet between the closing car door and the killer. The slug whined off the back of the train as the pusher fell back in the opposite direction.

It was clear shooting now. Only Harry and the killer were upright. As the cop moved forward to get a better angle, the killer hauled out a Colt .45 automatic from his jacket.

Harry couldn't duck for cover. If he did, he risked having an innocent bystander catching a slug. So, for three full seconds, the two adversaries stood some thirty feet apart and tried to kill each other.

The pusher danced back and snapped off his first shot. Harry felt it streak by his left shoulder and heard it shatter against the wall at least seventy feet behind him.

His answer was a .44 slug. It bashed into the wall behind the killer,

who fell to his face. Harry didn't think about his strategy—he just went down on one knee to get a better shot at the now-prone assassin.

Because of that, the second .45 missile went over his lowering head. Harry's next shot dug into the concrete platform an inch in front of the pusher, throwing shards into the man's face and blinding him.

The killer reacted by rolling toward the train. Callahan felt sure he had him. If he could get close enough for a clean shot, and if the pusher didn't stumble onto a human shield, Harry figured it was the end of the line for the man who had murdered Martha Murray.

"All right, freeze!" Harry demanded, running forward.

To his amazement, the man leaped into the air instead. It was a jump rivaling the one Harry had made to get out of the BART's way. The killer was diving upward the way most people were able to dive down. He slammed to a landing on top of the last subway car.

Without pausing, the pusher rolled and dropped on the other side. He landed, rolled, and came up running for the opposite platform. Harry was forced to watch his progress through the train's windows. He realized he didn't have a chance to catch up with the man. But he didn't have to just stand there, either.

"Get down!" he roared again, looking at all the confused, frightened people still in the subway car. They slid to the carpeted floor as he brought the Magnum up with both hands.

Harry emptied the gun right through both BART windows at the retreating figure of the pusher. The man was just beginning to vault onto the opposite platform when the .44 slugs started whizzing around him.

This time, Harry had a clear shot. The only problem was the window's deflection. It was tricky enough to throw off his aim, somewhat, but it wasn't enough to save the pusher completely.

The bullets smashed into the platform lip, shattered against the far wall, and ripped through the pusher's jacket pocket to his side. The pain threw the killer back in surprise, making him drop back down to the empty tracks.

Harry watched the wounded man move to the left and down the subway tunnel, as the cop quickly dumped out the spent .44 shells and reloaded. The obstructing automated BART train, oblivious to the battle, sealed its doors and continued on its way.

The pusher took off down the subway tunnel, holding onto his side. Callahan dropped to the tracks and went after him. As soon as he got away from the platform and into the darkened tube, he saw the cracking flashes and heard the deafening blast of the .45. The rounds

ricocheted off a support beam in the tunnel's center and burrowed into the wall in front of him.

The fight had turned into an insidious game, much like the ones Harry had seen at Jaffe's Kwik Lunch. The two ran, each listening carefully for the sound of the other's footsteps. When one stopped, the other would also stop, trying to pinpoint their respective positions.

And whenever one fired, the dark tunnel lit up as if with a strobe light—revealing the men for a split second, before darkness swallowed them again.

Harry ignored the man for the most part. He moved over to the far side and kept his eyes on the blood. The pusher was leaking badly from Harry's ripping Magnum shot, leaving a trail of crimson as he hobbled down the subway path.

"This is only going to end one way, and you know it!" Harry called after him, trusting the darkness and the echo to shield his location.

His first reply was a crashing .45 report, the bullet swallowed up by the night. The second answer was laughter. Mocking, choked, but honest laughter.

"Yeah," the pusher coughed, his echoing voice a thin rasp. "I know it. I know how it's going to end, Callahan. Better than you do. Much better than you."

Harry didn't like the sound of that, but he repressed a desire to shoot back at the man. The pusher would do him no good dead.

"Come on," Harry taunted, moving forward. "What's your name? Why did you push those three girls?"

The laughter started again, but it was choked off by a spasm of wet coughing. "Fuck off, Inspector," came the reply, finally. "You think I'm going to make it easy on you?"

"What do you mean?" Harry pressed, eyes intent on the bloodstains. He walked silently forward, keeping the red spots between his feet.

"You're a dead man," was the instant reply, which seemed to come from everywhere. "I don't have to kill you, because you're already dead. I'm dead, you're dead, we're all dead."

"You're talking crazy!" Callahan exploded, unnerved by the man's calm statements.

"You think so?" the pusher hissed, his rational tone making the hairs on the back of Harry's neck stand up. "Ah, you'll see," the pusher continued. "Your death is going to be worse than mine. Yours is going to be far worse. Because I'm in control now. You won't be."

Callahan couldn't understand him. He also couldn't understand why

the bloodstains had suddenly stopped. He moved forward cautiously and searched both tracks, but there were no bloodstains to be found.

Harry's teeth ground against each other, imprisoning any words he felt like yelling. He didn't want the killer to know he was spooked. As he moved back to where the last crimson droplet was, he heard another BART train coming from the opposite direction.

He turned to look at its approach far down the track. He wasn't unduly worried—there was plenty of time for him to get onto the empty track. But as he looked, he noticed a strange, squat blob lying on the track like a small pile of garbage.

As the train straightened, its headlights illuminated the obstruction from the rear. The pusher was fifty feet down the way, back toward the Lincoln Station, lying on top of one of the approaching BARTs rails.

He had doubled back, Harry realized in astonishment. He had only to stem the blood for a few moments while he waited against the wall for Callahan to pass, and then he walked back the way he had come. And now he was resting on the track in such a way that the BART train would scramble him.

"Thank you," he said to Harry as the train stopped in the station, back-lighting him with a macabre effect. "You have enabled me to prepare a proper death."

He held the gun out before him, keeping Harry at bay. Callahan could see the killer's stomach wound pumping out blood onto the thirsty ground. "I can promise you two things, Inspector," the pusher said. "Your death will not be so noble and . . . there won't be enough left of me to identify. Good-bye, Callahan. See you in hell."

The BART train closed its doors and started out of the station into the tunnel. Harry's stunned face was highlighted by its illumination. Then his Magnum came up on the end of a straight arm, and he started shooting.

He wasn't trying to prove anything, release his frustration, or get revenge. He had to kill the pusher before the train did. If he could nail him, he might be able to get him off the track before the subway disintegrated him.

The pusher realized that, just a second too late. He realized it as the .44 slugs dove into his torso. He quaked atop the rail, making a small animal sound as he died. The .45 automatic dropped out of his hand, and, again, Harry found himself running right into the face of an oncoming BART train.

He was going to make it. He was sure he was going to make it. He'd

just have enough time to make a flying tackle and haul the pusher off the rail to the safety of the far wall. There was no doubt in his mind.

Then he slipped on the blood. The pusher had doubled back, letting that much more blood drip onto the tracks. Callahan's racing feet slid across a large pool close to the body. He fell heavily on his back, the air knocked out of him. The pusher's punctured corpse was only twelve feet away.

It was twelve feet too many. Harry watched the train rend the killer down the middle just before he twisted feverishly to the side. The train barreled on, sweeping the pusher's guts in its wake, like water following a speedboat.

A hunk of skin, bone, and muscle slapped against Callahan's leg as a thin spray of blood dotted his face. He had to wait until the train passed before kicking it away. He threw up before he was able to wipe the pusher's remains from his head.

The Inspector rose unsteadily as the BART train disappeared around a far corner. He was weak from relief and astonishment. He moved carefully around the killer's ravaged remains. There was only one thing left whole after the train's passing, and that was the pusher's gun. It lay by the tracks, almost completely unscathed except for a scrape mark.

Harry picked it up. His eyes had adjusted to the tunnel's gloom enough to read what was etched on its barrel.

COLT MK IV/SERIES 20
.45 AUTOMATIC CALIBRE
GOVERNMENT MODEL

CHAPTER

Eight

Denise Patterson was gone when he got back to the platform.

In her place were dozens of cops, including Frank DiGeorgio and Al Bressler.

"Lieutenant," Harry said weakly. "Fancy meeting you here."

His superior couldn't bring himself to berate the Inspector, considering the shape he was in. He did explain that it wasn't long before the message from the owner of the wrecked Toyota got to his office. So, when the report of a gunfight on the BART came in, it was easy to put two and two together and find Dirty Harry.

"You had better have one hell of an explanation," Bressler warned, before turning and walking up the subway steps.

Harry simply stood calmly at the bottom. DiGeorgio came to his side with concern as an army of police bagged and numbered the mess the pusher had made on the tracks.

"Help me up the stairs," Harry told DiGeorgio quietly. "I don't think I can make it by myself."

The Sergeant was badly shaken by Harry's statement. DiGeorgio realized just how much Callahan had had to go through in the tunnel to be in this condition. By the time he had driven the Inspector three-quarters of the way to the Justice Building, Harry seemed to have gotten some of his inner strength back.

"Go to Patterson's place," he directed.

"Come on, Harry," DiGeorgio moaned with humor as well as concern.

"Don't argue with me," Callahan said dangerously.

That's all it took. DiGeorgio changed direction and sped toward Denise Patterson's Grand View Park apartment. When they arrived Harry unlatched the car door and kicked it open with venom.

"Be prepared for anything," he advised his partner, taking the Magnum out of its holster.

DiGeorgio had to run to keep up. By the time he got to the foyer, Callahan was already buzzing the super's apartment. When there was

no answer by the third ring, Callahan kicked open the door and started charging up the steps.

"Harry . . ." DiGeorgio called after him, worried.

"Probable Cause," Callahan growled back. As far as he was concerned, that was the understatement of the year.

He made it to the fourth floor in record time, taking the stairs three at a time. The symptoms of shock and exhaustion he had shown back at the station were completely gone. But what he found at apartment 4-B was enough to give him a relapse.

The door was closed and locked. Harry had seen it smashed, practically off its hinges. He tried the knob, The thing wouldn't budge. Stepping back, he kicked it open.

Inside was a perfectly clean, perfectly decorated, vacant apartment. The walls were unstained by blood. The furniture was unscathed. The floor was covered by wall-to-wall carpeting. All of the windowpanes were in one piece.

Callahan's face grew pale. DiGeorgio reached his partner's side to find Harry almost shaking. But, just a second later, all evidence of his weakness was gone. He slowly, almost imperceptibly straightened to his full height, and his .44 went back into its holster deliberately.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing?" came a voice behind them. They turned to see a short, bald, chubby man with a cigar clamped between his teeth and wearing a T-shirt, work pants, and windbreaker.

"You the super of this building?" Harry said, his voice clipped.

"Yeah," the guy said, with defiance, "and you can't just come barging in here . . . !"

Callahan brought the performance up short by flipping open his wallet, revealing his badge. "Police business," he said vacantly. Putting the shield away, he hooked a thumb back at the empty apartment. "Who lives here?"

"There?" the man said stupidly.

"Don't waste my time," Harry snapped.

"What is that?" the super continued stolidly. "4-B?"

DiGeorgio checked the number on the door. "Yeah."

"Nobody," the super said.

"Nobody?" DiGeorgio echoed. He remembered it as being the number of Patterson's apartment.

"Yeah," the super concurred. "Nobody's been in that apartment for

a couple of weeks now."

"Who was in it before that, then?" the Sergeant asked.

Before the super could answer, Harry interrupted. "Never mind."

Both men looked at him. "Thanks for your help," Harry said to the super. "Come on," he said to DiGeorgio, as he started down the steps.

Taking a final look at the apartment and the super, DiGeorgio followed his ranking partner's order.

"Hey!" the super called after them. Both men stopped and looked back. "What about the two broken doors?"

Harry stared at the audacious man for several seconds before acting. "Wait for me in the car," he told DiGeorgio. "I'll give him the address and number for departmental restitution."

Something in his voice and manner told DiGeorgio to do exactly what he was told. "Okay, Harry," he agreed, going down the steps as Callahan remounted them.

The Inspector stopped in front of the bland-looking super before starting to talk fast and low.

"My partner and my superior have nothing to do with this. You must know enough about me by now to know I'm telling the truth. This is between you and me."

The super's expression remained blank. "I don't know what you mean, Officer," he said hollowly.

"Then I'll tell you what I mean," Harry said, his lips moving back off his teeth. "You tell your boss to take those doors and shove them up his ass."

The super's expression was anything but vacuous as he talked on the phone in his apartment later that night.

"He may not know who he's dealing with exactly, but I think he has a real good idea."

The man on the other end, the one who had dealt with the murderer of the Murray girl, thought the situation over for a few seconds.

"It looks like he's giving us a choice," the super continued. "We can either fight him head-on, or we can manipulate matters so that he's satisfied."

"There's no such choice," the super's boss retorted. "Since the Patterson fiasco, we've done the research we should have done in the first place. When this Inspector Callahan gets hold of something, he doesn't let go. He is practically an autonomous executioner on the

police force."

"What are you saying?" the super asked. "We have no choice?"

"Exactly," his boss replied. "With Daley gone, you're in charge of enforcement. Satisfy the SFPD, by all means, but find that woman, then kill them both. Kill Patterson and Callahan."

When the two men got back to Homicide Office on the seventh floor of the Justice Building, Bressler had already gone home, leaving a message that he wanted to see Harry first thing in the morning.

The partners parted, but, unlike DiGeorgio, Harry didn't go home. He went down the block and entered the first bar he saw. It was a hangout for newspaper reporters, called Abbot's.

Harry liked the place because a guy could get some privacy for his phone calls. The tired cop sat in the booth and dialed the airport. Bill MacKenzie answered. Harry told him what he wanted, then hung up. He sidled up to the bar, had a double scotch, and then went to Mackenzie's house in Sausalito to wait.

The airport man showed up about an hour later and let Callahan into the cellar. Turning on the overhead light, he put down two heavy bags on the Ping-Pong table in the middle of the floor between the low stone walls.

Without a word, he unzipped the first bag and pulled out three small, round, paper-wrapped packages. "Here's the hamburgers you ordered," he said.

Bill MacKenzie was an ex-cop who had a food concession stand at the airport. He made the best chili-burgers Harry had ever eaten. That was the first thing Callahan needed from him. Because of his location, MacKenzie was also acutely aware of the trafficking in a variety of other commodities.

Harry pulled up one of the four bar stools that were in the basement —sans bar—and sat down, pulling the food toward him. He watched as MacKenzie began pulling larger items from his grab bags.

He laid three automatic pistols down next to the Ping-Pong net, side by side.

"The Browning Hi-Power nine-millimeter," MacKenzie narrated, pointing at what looked like a slightly sleeker version of the pusher's Colt .45. "Weight, thirty-two ounces. Barrel length, four and one-half inches. Magazine capacity, fourteen rounds."

The next in line looked like a gun used in a James Bond movie, except that it had a thyroid problem. Everything about it was bigger.

“The Beretta Model 92 nine-millimeter,” the burgermaster identified. “The weights the same, but the barrel is a half-inch longer. And,” he said meaningfully, “it can hold one more bullet in its belly.”

That brought them to the last gun on the table. “Here’s a cutie,” MacKenzie marveled, as Harry ate. “The Heckler and Koch VP70Z nine-millimeter. Only twenty-eight ounces, but it carries eighteen rounds in its double-stack magazine. Barrel length, four inches.”

Harry swallowed a hunk of ground beef and cocked an eyebrow at his longtime associate. “That’s all?”

“You asked for three things,” MacKenzie reminded him. “Accuracy, stopping power, and surprise.”

Harry smiled grimly. He remembered, all right. He wanted to show them something when they thought he was out of bullets.

“Not many guns can deliver all three,” the gun supplier continued. “Some Smith and Wesson automatics can carry fourteen rounds, but the Browning’s got better accuracy.”

“Which do you suggest?” Harry asked, finishing off the first burger.

“You don’t have time to test?” MacKenzie asked hopefully.

“I may not have time to finish eating,” Harry said honestly.

“Okay,” said the other man, sweeping the Heckler and Koch off of the table. “Stick to the Browning. It’s the most similar in size, shape, and use to your Model 29 revolver.” MacKenzie turned from the guns and looked directly at Harry for the first time.

“What’s the matter, anyway? The Magnum fail you?”

Callahan hefted the automatic in one hand while holding the second burger in the other. “A man has to know his limitations,” he said. “There comes a time when six rounds, even with three speed loaders, aren’t enough.”

“Um-hm,” MacKenzie agreed. “And speaking of that . . .”

The man pushed the handguns aside and opened the second sack. He pulled out three even larger packages, each individually wrapped.

“All right!” Bill exclaimed, revealing a submachine gun which looked like a Browning with delusions of grandeur. It had the Browning’s handle, but that was in the middle of what looked like a metal spaghetti box with a barrel coming out of the front end.

“The Austrian Steyr MP69,” MacKenzie proclaimed proudly. “Nine-millimeter, twenty-five round magazine. Effective range: over a hundred yards. Capable of firing five hundred and fifty rounds a minute.”

The supplier quickly unwrapped the other two submachine guns. “The Uzi and Mac I’m sure you already know,” he said. “Take your pick.”

The former was an Israeli submachine gun, and the latter was a United States variation. “I’ll take your suggestion first,” Harry countered.

MacKenzie shrugged. “The Steyr has a safety catch that can be operated from either side,” he said diffidently. “But I don’t think you’re much interested in safety at the moment.” He frowned apathetically and turned away from the table. “I only wanted to give you a choice, anyway. Take the Mac. It’s the smallest and lightest of the three, with thirty-two bullets in its belly.”

Callahan nodded and started working on the third burger, while MacKenzie laid out the extra magazines of ammo Harry wanted. MacKenzie leaned back when the Ping-Pong table looked like the entire armory for a SWAT team. Then he couldn’t help looking at the calmly chewing cop out of the corner of his eye.

“So what is it, Harry? You planning to take a vacation in El Salvador?”

“Uh—uh.” The Inspector shook his head. “We made a deal. I don’t ask where you got these things, and you don’t ask what I’m going to do with them.”

“All right,” MacKenzie said reluctantly. “You’re the boss, Harry. But I’d feel a lot better if I knew what you were into.”

“No, you wouldn’t,” the cop promised.

“Be that way, then,” the supplier said with mock indifference. “You’ve got the Browning, and you’ve got the Mac—complete with enough ammunition to start your own Third-World country.”

MacKenzie turned to survey the weaponry with professional satisfaction. “That’s the ticket, Harry,” he said, as the cop finished off the third sandwich. “Stick with American goods. No one knows more about murdering its own.”

Everybody was all smiles at the office the next morning. Everybody, that is, except Harry Callahan.

He had had a miserable night. After leaving MacKenzie’s, he had sold his car. He had taken the money and bought another one from a perfect stranger. He couldn’t chance getting help from any of his police car associates, since he didn’t want this vehicle traceable to him.

He had actually gone to one of those car forests that was open twenty-four hours a day, and had caught the salesman in seven lies before he could convince the baby-eating bastard to give him a decent deal.

Then he took his new car, parked it in an alley, and did the best tune-up job he could, minus tools or lights. Afterward, he managed to sleep in the back seat for a few hours without his screaming subconscious keeping him awake.

If he was going to live through the next few days, he figured he needed the rest. That rationalization quieted one set of nerves, but stretched another to its breaking point.

His mental alarm clock woke him at the crack of dawn. He found a place to park the car and took a taxi to headquarters, fully expecting to fall down the flaming mouth of Lieutenant Bressler.

At best, he thought he'd have to make some kind of sense out of last night's obstacle course and subway shoot-out. At worst, he thought he would be brought up on charges of recklessly endangering the public.

Instead, when he entered the Lieutenant's office, Bressler got up from his chair, came around the desk, and shook his hand. Then he offered Harry a seat on his beaten couch and suggested that they both have a slug of his bottom-drawer whiskey to clear away the sandman's cobwebs.

Callahan sat, refusing to be surprised by this sudden change, with a paper cup of whiskey in his hand, listening to Bressler explain to him what he had done last night and why he had done it.

"The report came in to the Commissioner last night." The Lieutenant nearly gushed with relief. "The fingerprints of the man in the subway matched those of Corporal George Daley, an army man right in the middle of a court-martial for unbecoming conduct. He escaped off the Miramar base in San Diego and turned up here." The Lieutenant took a swig of his booze and smacked his lips. "The Commissioner is satisfied," he concluded.

"Satisfied of what?" Harry wanted to know.

Bressler looked over at the Inspector with surprise. "That Daley is our man," he said, with conviction. "Look, Harry, Maggin was a mistake, we'll admit that. He was so far gone on drugs, he probably didn't even know what he was doing at the hospital, or why.

"But Daley was being drummed out of the military because of his antisocial behavior. He was an extremely violent man who couldn't understand why that didn't please his superiors."

"That doesn't say anything about why he would push women onto

subway tracks," Harry interrupted. "He was mad at the army, not at women."

"I'm sorry, Harry," Bressler said, leaning over his desk with concern. "Didn't you know? His first victim, this Ms. Patterson, did work for the military."

Callahan felt a slight chill across his back. He covered his feeling of approaching doom by swallowing the whiskey. He handed back the empty cup for a refill. He needed it.

Bressler reluctantly refilled Harry's cup, and went on with the official story. "The base psychiatrist has already stated that Daley was so satisfied with the feeling of power he got from shoving Patterson onto the tracks that he continued doing it."

"Who said that?" Callahan asked him. "Did you talk to him?"

"It's all in the report," Bressler replied.

"Where is it? I'd like to read it."

"The Commissioner has it."

Harry heard the words as if they were etched on a stone that slammed shut over a grave. He kept trying. "Where did Patterson work?"

The Lieutenant thought about: it. "The report didn't say," he remembered. "But it did say that Patterson has since left the military's employ. I'm sure she'll be happy to know that the man who pushed her is no longer at large. Do you know where she lives, Harry?"

"No."

"Well, that's not important." Bressler waved the thought away. "What is important is that the department is satisfied that you were acting in the best interests of the San Francisco citizens." The Lieutenant stood up and put out his hand. "You did a great job, Harry. Congratulations."

Bressler kept shaking Harry's hand as he led him out of the office. "Now, look, Harry, take it easy like I told you before, okay? I want you fit, rested, and ready to go when the Goldfarb warrants come in, all right?"

Harry nodded absently. Bressler let go of his hand, clapped him on the shoulder, and returned the nod. "Go home, Harry. I'll call you when I need you. Go home."

With that, the Lieutenant went back inside his office and closed the door. Harry stood in place for a few moments, digesting the Daley information, then turned toward his own office cubicle. Frank DiGeorgio was standing inside, staring with a troubled look at a piece

of computer paper.

Harry stood in the doorway as the Sergeant looked up, at a loss for understanding. “It says she doesn’t exist, Harry,” he said incredulously. “Yesterday, it said that Denise Patterson lived at the Grand View Apartment House, number 4-B. Today, it says ‘No Data.’ No data, Harry. I just don’t get it.”

Callahan moved into the office and stopped just inches away from his partner. “Don’t get it, Frank,” he warned urgently, almost in a whisper. “Forget about it. I’m telling you straight. Forget about it, forget about the last few nights, and forget about me. I don’t trust you anymore, Frank, you understand? I don’t want you to be my partner anymore. If they call you for the Goldfarb bust, tell them I won’t work with you.”

“Harry,” DiGeorgio said in confusion. “You sure you know what you’re doing?”

Callahan went to the door. “You don’t want to be around me for a while, period. Get it?”

DiGeorgio nodded reluctantly.

“Say hello to your wife and kids for me,” Harry reminded him pointedly, and left his office.

He left the homicide department, left the seventh floor, and left the Justice Building. He couldn’t help wondering whether he’d ever come back.

He couldn’t keep running. In fact, he couldn’t start running. If he did, he’d be what they call a “naked runner” in the espionage trade. That’s a man with nearly no contacts, no defense, and no place to go.

If he tried running for it, his enemy could pick him off easily, making it look as if he had died in one of dozens of seemingly natural or accidental ways. But if he stayed on his own turf and met them on his own terms, his possible death would at least raise some eyebrows, create some suspicion.

That way, whoever it was he was fighting might think twice before killing him. Either that, or they’d have to wait and do an awful lot of careful planning to have Harry die in a perfectly acceptable manner.

Unfortunately, a perfectly acceptable manner for a big-city homicide cop was an explosive in the car, a bomb in the mailbox, or a sniper on the opposite roof—all of which Harry had experienced during his career.

Even so, he knew he couldn’t put it off forever. He had to go back to

Russian Hill sometime. And he figured his hunters wouldn't want to raise any commotion in his apartment building. Unlike Grand View, it wasn't filled with military employees.

As long as he was careful, and didn't do any unusual posturing in front of the windows, Callahan figured that, contrary to the famous saying, you *can* go home again.

That didn't mean he was just going to waltz in, however. Harry waited until night had fallen and all of his neighbors had settled in for a long winter's nap. Only then did he cross the street, quietly unlock the front door and go upstairs—with his Magnum held in his right hand.

He stopped only when he got to his floor. The hall light was off. A bad sign. It was a naked, pale yellow bulb, so it wouldn't be unusual for it to be out, but tonight wasn't a good night for coincidences.

All it would take was one man inside a dark apartment to put one silenced bullet into him as he entered, and there'd be no witnesses for one more dead cop whose murder would never be solved.

But Harry wasn't going to turn back now. He slid forward and put his hand on the light. It flickered to life for a second. In that second, Callahan saw that there was no one else in the hall.

He twisted his hand, and the light went on. It was slightly unscrewed. The question was: how? By gravity or by hand? Callahan felt himself smiling. Suddenly, he looked forward to going in.

He found himself wanting to face whatever they were going to throw at him. They'd find out all too soon that he wasn't some dupe they could push onto the subway tracks.

He went in fast, low, and professionally. He kicked open the door, threw himself sideways, somersaulted, and came up pointing his Magnum right into the face of Denise Patterson.

CHAPTER

Nine

Now just what the hell do you do?

It was the first thing Harry wanted to know after he closed and locked the door behind him. He was about to flick on the lights when her outstretched arm stopped him.

"Please . . . please don't. I'm afraid."

"It's a little late for that," Harry reminded her, but took his hand off the switch. "You didn't seem paralyzed with fear when your apartment was attacked." He remained standing by the door. She sat near the head of his bed, her legs tucked under her.

"You don't understand . . ."

"Make me understand."

"They want to kill me."

"That much is obvious. They want to kill me, too."

She waved her arms abruptly, as if trying to clear the air of all the words which swooped around and stung her like verbal bees. He saw her silhouette against the clear winter moonlight slipping under and around his pulled shades.

"Please. Let me explain. It's hard for me."

"Better start talking then," Harry said hastily, moving into the room. "I'm only here for a couple of minutes."

As the young woman began to talk, Harry began checking up the electronic junk he had picked up at Sid Kleinman's shop on the way home. Sid had outfitted him with the body mike he had used when delivering the extortion money to the Scorpio Sniper way back when, and he had serviced Harry's police needs ever since then. But tonight he had outdone himself. Still, in all those years, his payment never changed.

"Bring it back in one piece," he would say. "That's enough."

Harry didn't know what he'd do without friends like Kleinman and MacKenzie. Actually, he did know what he'd do. He'd die.

First, he tested the room and the phone for bugs, using a little box-shaped counter. There were none. Next, he started installing little

things in the receiver and base of the phone. While he worked, the woman told him her life story.

Her name was Denise Barbara Patterson and she had graduated from Cornell with honors, going on to graduate work in the biological sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her work so impressed government representatives that they offered her a job with Uncle Sam.

She was an executive secretary to the Surgeon General for five miserable years, during which time she fought sex discrimination so that she could be transferred to active research duty. Once she had finally achieved her goal, she had had reason to wish she was back in the typing pool.

She became a lab technician for the West Coast ARDF—or, as they called it affectionately, "Arf." Sadly, it turned out that this dog's bite was worse than its bark. It all spelled out the Army research and Development Facilities—a fancy name for an autonomous government-funded unit dedicated to one thing: the perfection of germ warfare.

"Dr. Carr, the head of the Program, is a brilliant scientist," Patterson admitted, "but, like many dedicated scientists, he loses track of the means through which to achieve his end."

"Which means he doesn't give a shit about people," Harry translated, screwing the mouthpiece of the phone back on.

"Y-*yes*," she hesitantly agreed. "He needed a method with which to test our latest advance which incorporated the responses of several thousand cases. And he was sure that the government wouldn't grant him the right because of the recent cutbacks in spending, and the danger of mutated contamination . . ."

"Hold it," Harry declared. "Inflation I can understand. What does the rest of that mean?"

It seemed that the substance they had come up with was not a permanent one. There was a possibility that it could change from causing temporary light damage to causing permanent heavy damage.

What Patterson called the "advance" was a mixture dubbed "Vasculene." It wasn't a new hair tonic, but a slowly spreading gas which could cause the tips of the human circulatory system to constrict. In other words, it could cause light cases of frostbite in the fingers and toes.

"The subways," Harry breathed, pausing in his toils as the information sank in. "He tested it in the subways." Callahan remembered the old lady holding up her chalky-colored fingers. He

remembered blowing on his own digits, trying to dispel the strange chill.

Patterson nodded. “I just stumbled onto it by accident. He was keeping it a secret, but I met him by chance down there and noticed a gas-dispensing device on his attaché case. I confronted him with it, right then and there. He argued that it was harmless, and that he was willing to take the risk himself. I argued that it was unfair, irresponsible, and impossible to gauge the results.”

“Not to mention illegal,” Callahan interjected sourly.

Patterson laughed—a sick, hopeless satire of mirth. “Then I tripped. I was so upset that when I tried to move away from him, I stumbled and fell off the platform.”

That’s how it all started. That simply, and that stupidly. By the time she had saved herself and gotten pulled out, Dr. Carr was already gone. She was confused, upset, and in pain from her broken leg. Suddenly, she didn’t know how to tell the truth without dragging Carr’s name into it. So she lied. She said she didn’t know how she had come to fall.

“Later, I realized that I should have simply said that I tripped,” she admitted. “But by then it was too late.”

“By then, Dr. Carr was having other girls shoved in front of trains so your accident wouldn’t look so unusual,” Harry reasoned.

“But I didn’t know that!” Patterson stressed, leaning forward on the bed. “I just thought that my falling had given some psycho a sick idea!”

Harry got to his feet, work completed. “Until the night I showed up,” he told her. “Come on, we can’t stay here.”

He took her hand and led her down to the basement. From there, they went out the back way and into an alley. Harry’s new car was parked in a spot across the alley road. Pulling out his .44, he brought the girl across the cold, dark space. He checked the edges of the passenger door before he opened it for her.

“Get in,” he instructed. She complied, while he checked the rest of the car for wires and other assorted booby traps. With the Magnum still in his hand, it took him almost ten minutes.

“Do you think they’ll try to kill us?” she asked hesitantly as he got in.

“Not here,” he guessed, turning on the motor. “They can’t afford to make too much noise. It’ll wake up the neighbors.”

“They could have silencers,” Patterson worried.

"This doesn't," Harry said, holding up his big revolver. He pulled out of the spot and drove into the streets.

"We had all signed oaths of secrecy," Patterson went on to explain. "I couldn't tell you anything when you came that night. And then, when the shooting started, I realized that the Program now considered me a security risk. I thought the only way I could save myself was by getting to Dr. Carr and explaining."

Here she paused, looking guiltily down at the cracked dashboard. "Explaining that I had no intention of telling anybody anything," she confessed. "Our work is important, Inspector," she said with sudden pride, sitting up straight. "We're responsible for the security of this entire country. I'm not about to risk that because Dr. Carr got a little overzealous . . . !"

"Save it for the judge," Harry suggested with sickened sarcasm as he scanned the streets carefully, looking for any hint of a tail. "Carr, with his Program, is obviously way beyond that point now. The only reason he decided to kill you gangland style was because I entered the picture. He wouldn't risk your telling me anything. He obviously thinks no leak is too small to drop an elephant on."

"If only I could get him . . ." she seethed.

"Don't look at me," Callahan said flatly. "I'm not going to ride through the gauntlet. You'd only be signing your own death warrant, anyway. Carr's never going to trust you again, no matter what you say. He's got it in mind that you're a threat, and even worse, he's already told his goons to do something about it."

"Then," Denise Patterson said in a frightened, faraway voice, "there's nothing I can do . . . ?"

Harry was about to answer when he heard a ragged chopping sound outside the car. He looked in the rear-view mirror, seeing only the rolling hills of South San Francisco. He had driven that far off the beaten path to make sure they weren't followed. But now, a whipping, humming sound was filling the inside of the car from outside the open window.

"Shit," Callahan spat. "What is that?"

Patterson turned to look out of her own window as the noise got so loud it made the dashboard vibrate. Harry saw the wind whipping up the loose dirt on the hilly roadway. He realized what was happening just as the big metal bird dropped out of the sky and onto the car's roof.

The helicopter smashed down on the auto's roof with its landing struts. The worn vehicle's roof was not strong enough to take that sort

of punishment. It bent in the middle and cracked open, accompanied by Patterson's scream.

The car sank on its ancient shocks, sliding across the mostly dirt road. Harry practically had to spin the wheel to keep in control. Then he figured, why bother trying to keep on the road?

"Hold on!" he warned her and whirled the wheel to the right. The heavy, tanklike auto pointed itself in that direction and took a dive. The helicopter swept by as the aged vehicle barreled down the grassy hill.

Patterson was screaming as the car seemed to gather momentum. Harry started by tapping the brake, then stomping on it, finally slamming both feet on the pedal and keeping them there.

"Get under the dashboard!" Harry demanded between his clamped teeth. "It's going to be a bumpy ride!"

Just as she obeyed, the car hit a tip and took it like an Olympic ski jumper. The front smashed down, slamming Harry into the wheel, and then the back swept up, pushing his head into the ceiling.

The damn thing was just too heavy to fly very far, and it landed on all four wheels as Harry locked his arms and pushed his legs straight. The hill had settled into a sloping decline, so Callahan tromped back down on the accelerator while looking out of the window for the Program's eye-in-the-sky.

It came sweeping from the passenger's side, coming in so low it actually ripped the swinging radio antenna off the hood.

"Fuck," Harry muttered, ducking his head back in. "They mean business." Reacting to his comment, Patterson started to crawl out from under the front section. "Stay down!" Harry commanded. "There's no neighbors to wake out here."

Harry kept the gas pedal floored as the slope reached bottom and things began to move up again. He saw that they were rapidly coming to the top of another hill. And from the right, he heard the helicopter coming in to make another run.

"Roll up your window," he barked. "I don't want to lose you." Staying where she was, Patterson did as she was told and then pressed herself even harder into the cramped opening.

Just as they reached the top of the hill, the whirlybird swept across again, this time leaving souvenirs. The window Patterson had just closed shattered, and bullets dug into the passenger seat where Patterson had been sitting.

Harry spun the wheel to the left, but that was too much for the old car to take. The front jerked in the right direction, but the rear wheels

skidded, tearing up huge hunks of grassy ground, and the car tottered on the crest of the hill for a moment before it started rolling.

In that one second, Harry killed the engine and joined Patterson under the dashboard. The car rolled sideways all the way down the second hill. All the windows were broken, the ceiling was almost caved in, and the auto's sides were badly battered.

Callahan rose quickly behind the wheel and looked out to see a forest two hundred yards in front of them. He jammed the key in the ignition. Incredibly, the engine turned over.

"You can't kill the good ones with a stick," Callahan marveled. His judgment of cars hadn't failed him. After all, he had owned the one he sold to get this one for more than ten years.

"To hell with the car, you're trying to get us killed!" Patterson shouted.

"Shut up," Harry told her. "If we stop, they'll do the job for me." He set the car heading right for the woods, as the copter swept down behind them.

Harry hit the ceiling with one fist until the cracked rear-view mirror was high enough for him to see plainly the flying machine behind them. Two men were in the clear, open cockpit. One was handling the controls and the other had a .308 calibre Mark V assault rifle in his mitts.

Callahan wanted to swerve the car so they wouldn't make such an easy target, but he needed speed to get to the trees. The copter had to veer off to avoid crashing into the branches. Now, if only he could get there before the gun's bullets tore them up . . .

He heard the lead thunking into the trunk and zipping into the back seat. He no longer had a choice. He swerved the car to the left, pulling it out of the line of fire.

The bullets which would have punctured both of them dug into the ground, the speeding copter swept ahead, and the car scraped between two trees into the forest.

"Okay, okay, we made it," the woman cried. "Slow down."

"Forget it," Callahan declared. "I'm not going to be boxed in here." He continued to fight the wheel for supremacy as the car kept narrowly missing trees.

"Boxed in?" Patterson echoed. "Boxed in? What are you talking about!"

"Shut up and stay down," Harry said quietly, intent on what he was doing. The dangerous edge in his hushed voice finally convinced

Patterson to stay out of the way.

The side-view mirror was smashed off by a tree as Harry squeezed the auto through. A branch reached through the passenger's window and was broken off by a sudden turn. Harry saw moonlight up ahead and directed the seemingly armored vehicle toward it.

He slammed on the brakes almost as soon as the car emerged from the other side of the woods. Patterson was thrown forward, and the wheels skidded at least ten feet.

All Harry had seen when coming out of the trees was Daly City, a suburb of San Francisco, stretched out before him. That meant there were no more trees, no more hills, no more ground. They were just yards away from the edge of a cliff.

Callahan slammed the vehicle into reverse, spun the wheel to the left, and drove between the lip of the cliff and the edge of the forest.

"Listen," he snarled. "You asked me what you could do against Carr, before. Well, I'm telling you now. You can stand and fight. Fight, God damn it."

The car burst into a clearing, but Callahan kept it close to the cliff's edge. He heard the whirring blades and looked out his nonexistent windowpane. "Here they come now. Right on schedule."

As soon as he had spoken, Harry slammed on the brakes. The car lurched to a stop, but even before the rear tires had settled, Harry was struggling into the back seat. He pulled the seat's back away, revealing the inside of the trunk. From the trunk he pulled a steel case, which he quickly unclipped.

From the helicopter, the two Program men saw the car suddenly stop and Harry crawl out of the rear window opening. He stood half on the ceiling and half on the trunk of the battered car. He held his .44 above his head, and waved them on.

Carr's men looked at each other. Unable to communicate over the roar of the rotor blades, the man with the gun made a circling sign next to his ear with his first finger and then motioned for the pilot to swoop in for a final run.

Callahan was right where they wanted him. With the copter in front and the cliff behind, there was nowhere to go. The .308 bullets would tear him in half. The helicopter dipped and came in low and fast.

The gunman held his fire until he was sure he had Harry dead to rights. The cop kept waving his Magnum until it was impossible for the copter to swerve away.

Then Harry threw down the .44, and pulled out the Mac submachine gun from under his jacket. He had had no problem fitting

the seven-inch long weapon behind his back, and the Program men didn't even see it before Harry had ripped the gun's thirty-two nine-millimeter bullets across the front of their copter bubble.

Callahan let the slicing motion of his firing take him right off the car's roof as the helicopter kept going, minus a live driver and copilot. Both men had had their middles perforated with lead.

If they weren't killed when Harry shot them, they died when the helicopter dipped, spun, and smashed into the side of the cliff. From there it dropped like a crushed bug to the rock-strewn ground.

Harry threw the Mac into the back seat and jumped behind the wheel as if he were stunt driving for "The Dukes of Hazzard."

"What . . . what have you done?" Patterson stammered, coming out of her hiding place. "What happened?"

Harry clucked in sympathy. "Another terrible aviation accident."

CHAPTER

Ten

Harry stole a car near the Frisco–San Mateo line. Even with the Program's eye-in-the-sky out of action, driving the nearly destroyed used car would be a dead giveaway. And when Harry thought of it as a dead giveaway, he meant "dead."

He just didn't know whether the helicopter men had had a radio link with Carr, or how much they had said if they did. More "official" government cars filled with heavily-armed agents, just doing their duty, could be converging on the location that very minute.

So Harry played it safe. He left their reject from the demolition derby in a driveway and stole a dark blue Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. It came with plush seats, an AM/FM radio, and Denise Patterson.

"You can't keep on doing this," she pleaded with him. "It's insane."

Callahan looked at her with sardonic disbelief. Her boss tests an unstable germ-warfare mixture in the subway, orders girls to be pushed onto the tracks, sends a killer copter after them, and she's calling the cop insane?

Patterson seemed to read his thoughts, because she quieted and looked at her hands on her lap for a moment before continuing: "What I mean is, you can't fight the whole government."

Harry pulled the car into an alley between the Southern Freeway and Third Street. "I don't think I am," he said, stopping the car and pushing open the door with his foot. "Stay here," he told the woman, before she could question him about the statement.

Harry walked down the alley, around the corner, and into the one entrance of a corner building. He went up two flights of rickety, wooden stairs and pushed through a warped wooden door nailed to a straight metal one.

On the other side of the obstruction was a plain but comfortably lived-in studio. There was a bed which looked as if it had been stolen off a military base, an ancient card table with four rusting chairs, an orange crate with an AM/FM/Ham radio on it, and an overstuffed sofa

which looked like someone's lumpy, sagging aunt.

Lying across the sofa was a comatose figure with a bottle in his hand.

"All right, Hux," Harry called, clapping his hands. "The ride's over. End of the line. Everybody out."

The BART drunk woke up, snorting. "Morning already?" he asked the ceiling.

"Morning already," Harry agreed, taking him by the arm. "The coast is clear. You can go back on the trains again."

"Hey, that's great," the drunk slurred, letting Harry get him to his feet. But then he looked around the room wistfully. "Too bad, though. Too bad. I'm going to miss this place."

"You'll get over it," Harry said, shoving a twenty-dollar bill into the bum's hand. "Don't come back, understand? Those kids who're trying to kill you will come here."

"Shit," Huxley spit. "Those kids, yeah. Don't want that. Don't you worry, Harry old pal, I won't come back."

Callahan got him downstairs and to the next intersection. He flagged down a taxi and shoved Huxley into the back seat. Another twenty went to the driver.

"Take him wherever he wants until ten runs out," Callahan told him. For a ten-spot tip, the driver was willing.

Harry went back to the Cutlass, suddenly experiencing a feeling of dread. He picked up speed as he rounded the corner of the alley, afraid Patterson might not be in the car anymore.

She was, but he wasn't much relieved. "You can't fight him," she contended as he led her to the hideout, carrying the metal weapons case and a thin vinyl case. "Do you have any idea what kind of power he wields? What kind of connections he has?"

Harry nodded, pushing open the half-wood, half-metal door. "I'm learning more about that all the time."

"He can tap into any computer in the state and get anything he wants," she declared, marveling at it as she remembered. "He can change anything on anyone . . ."

Callahan remembered the report on Daley which the Commissioner supposedly had. He wondered how it had been produced, and where it came from. Harry brought the woman over to the bed and sat her down.

"But remember something," he said, cutting off her paranoid scenario. "He's afraid of you. He's afraid you'll tell somebody about

this."

"Of course he is." Patterson waved Harry's statement away. "He has every right to be."

"No, he doesn't," Callahan countered. "It doesn't make any sense. If the government is in on his Program, then all they have to do is deny any report. End of story. But what if Carr doesn't want his superiors to know about this stuff?"

A sudden growing awareness began to dawn across Patterson's features. "You mean," she said in amazement, "that he wants to take over the government?"

Harry snorted. "I doubt it. But he knows damn well that if anybody responsible in power gets wind of what he's doing, the whole Program goes right down the toilet."

Patterson suddenly saw the hope she had lost the moment her coffee mug had burst. "So all we have to do is get to the papers," she marveled. "But won't that make him want to kill me all the more?"

"But he can't do it then without creating suspicion. You'll be alive while the government comes down hard on him."

Patterson began to perk up considerably. "So all we have to do is wait until morning . . ."

"Bullshit," Harry countered. "Papers don't work on a nine-to-five shift. Let's get this over with."

Just then, the vinyl attaché case rang. Patterson gave a little shriek before shoving her fist in her mouth. Harry looked at the case with annoyance. Well, at least the call-transferring device Kleinman had given him worked.

Harry opened the case on the floor and pulled out the red, slim-line receiver. Any call that came in on Harry's phone would be automatically transferred to this radio-controlled one. Even if there was a bug on the phone in Harry's apartment, it wouldn't pick up what he said on this one.

"Yeah," Harry said into the condenser mouthpiece.

"Harry." It was Bressler. "Hope I didn't wake you."

Callahan thought about saying something like "Does that mean you hope you did?", but he found he didn't want to talk at all.

"No," he finally replied.

The Lieutenant could take a hint. He got right to the point. "The Goldfarb warrants came in. Would you mind helping out tonight?"

Harry couldn't very well say no. He needed to be on the force's

good side if he wasn't to become a "naked runner." He needed all the friends and protection he could afford. They weren't out of the Program's shadow yet.

"Why not?" Harry mused aloud. "It's a night like any other, right?"

"Right," Bressler laughed self-consciously. "If you say so, Harry. When can you be here?"

Callahan glanced at the girl. She was looking at the bed and pulling on her lower lip. "I've got to do some quick errands," he told his boss. "Let me meet you."

He got all the information. Bressler himself wasn't going to be in on it. Since the arrest was going to go down in North Beach, the control was going to the cops in that jurisdiction. Which was all the more reason Bressler wanted Harry in on it. If everything went well, then the North Beach precinct got the credit. If things screwed up, Bressler at Central Headquarters got the blame.

After Harry hung the phone up in the attaché case, he turned to find Patterson curled up on the far end of the bed. She had her legs bent, her knees up to her face, and her arms hugging her calves.

"Let's go," Harry said. "I'll drop you off at the *Herald.*"

"No," the woman said.

Harry took one step toward her.

"Even if you force me to go, I won't say anything," she warned him.

Harry stood his ground. "Are you out of your fucking mind?" he asked slowly. He just couldn't conceive of such stupidity.

"No, you are!" she flared back. "Our work is too important. I can't jeopardize it."

"It's not your work anymore," Harry reminded her.

"Yes, it is," she contended. "It's all our work. If the Program succeeds, we no longer have anything to fear from anyone. It is they who have to fear us. We're talking about total security."

"You're talking total insanity," Harry seethed. "What difference does it make whether you can destroy the world with bombs or germs?"

"It's you who're nuts," Patterson declared. "You can't fight this. It's bigger than just you or me or Dr. Carr. It's the future of this entire country."

Harry stared at her desperate, proud, misguided face before choosing his words very carefully. "Fuck this country. I'm not going to stand around and wait to be killed for anything or anyone. You still think you can convince Carr that you're one of the boys. Forget it.

Even if you get to him and make him listen, he'll smile and smile, and then you'll be dead."

Harry heard the subway echo of Corporal George Daley in his mind. "You're dead, I'm dead, we're all dead . . ."

Patterson's harsh reply brought him back to reality. "No. I can convince him. The Program is more important."

Callahan gave up. He grabbed his cases and slid them out of the room with two angry throws. Pulling two Yale locks off of the boarded-up windowsills, he marched backward to the door.

"You stay here and think about it," he told her from the door. "The bathroom's through there," he said, with a jerk of his head. "And there's beer and cheese in the fridge."

He slammed the door closed, threw the clasps into place, and locked the door. He couldn't chance losing his one reasonable escape. He'd have to keep her there until he got back, and if she wouldn't talk, he would.

He'd tell the press everything he knew, up to, and including, her connection with Dr. Carr. Even if she were still unwilling to corroborate, the press would still report that she knew everything there was to know about the Program, thus forcing Carr's hand.

Harry drove the stolen car like a man possessed until he reached the North Beach precinct. He handed it over to the cops there, saying he had found it with the keys still inside and no clues as to the thieves. And, since he was an inspector, no one doubted him.

Inside, he was directed to Captain Dobbin's office. Wendall Dobbin was waiting for him on the second floor in the company of the other unit officers. The Captain, a beefy, dark-haired police vet, made the introductions.

There was Detective Manuel Rodriguez, who looked the part. He was strictly Spanish, down to the kinky, greased, short-cropped, black hair, and the pencil-thin mustache. He was short—just making it over the policy five-foot-six requirement.

Sergeant Eddie Bluth was next, a thin Midwesterner with sparse, almost white hair, and a black mustache. Add fifty pounds and he'd look like George Peppard. Next to him was Detective Rod Uslan, an athletic black man.

Since no one had seen Callahan before, except for the occasional photo in the newspaper, no one questioned his unusual outfit of a dark turtleneck, dark pants, and a long, loose raincoat.

"Look, I'm sorry it has to be tonight," Dobbin said. "But that's what police work is all about. We've got to be ready any time, any place. At

least, these guys won't be expecting us to hit."

"These guys" were: Adam and Francis Stilino, who were a brother team of jewel thieves and smugglers; Aaron Whitelaw, their contact in the diamond district; and Avery Jessup, their fence.

"They're in Jessup's office at Grant and Pacific," Dobbin revealed. "It should be fast and simple. Bluth stays down in the lobby, covering the elevators. Rodriguez covers the alley outside. Uslan and Callahan come with me upstairs. I'll cover the hall while you two go in. Guns out, papers down—that's it. We cuff them, get them into the cars, book them, and go home. Right. Any questions?"

There were none. Harry stretched out in the back seat of Dobbin's nondescript tan car with Uslan next to the Captain in the front, while the other two detectives rode in a dark-green Pontiac. Nobody had much to say to each other. Harry just wanted to get the job over with and get back to Patterson. The sooner he could spill his guts, the better he would like it.

Dobbin and Uslan kept looking at each other as they drove through the well-lit night. It was obvious that the city was reveling, and it was equally obvious that the North Beach cops didn't much like the idea of a downtown chaperone coming along.

Callahan didn't care. He stared out the window, seeing nothing until they got to the corner of Grant and Pacific. When everyone parked and got out, it was just like stepping into New York's Greenwich Village or Boston's Newbury Street. Everywhere were art galleries, coffee houses, bars, and brownstones.

The five-man arrest unit walked across the street to a building that had seen residents come and go for at least sixty years. It had the look, feel, and smell of a structure erected in the twenties. Even though it was simple, squat, and unadorned, it reeked of rotting deco.

Dobbin nodded at the Spaniard, who trotted around the corner to cover the space between buildings in case anybody wanted to fire-escape it. The rest went inside the dim, ash-smelling, fake-marble lobby which consisted of a small snack bar which had already had its sliding cage front locked for the night, and two elevators with floor pointers rather than digital floor displays above their sliding doors.

The Captain glanced at Bluth, who leaned casually against the wall. The next second, he stood straight again, brushing the greasy dust off the shoulder of his jacket. The black man pressed the up button and the car to the right dutifully opened. Harry and Dobbin followed Uslan in.

The ride was short and uneventful. The Captain stopped the car on

the second floor so that the trio could walk up to the third. The stairway door opened onto a landing with the elevators against one side wall and the door marked A. Jessup Industries across from them.

It was a classic door to go along with the classic structure. There was a stippled, opaque-glass pane taking up most of the upper part, and a simple copper-colored knob to the right Dobbin and Uslan marched right up to it.

The Captain then held back, motioning Harry to go ahead. Callahan didn't think twice about it. He didn't think at all until the big black man grabbed one arm, and Dobbin hit him across the back with all his weight behind it.

Harry's feet left the ground as Uslan pushed and he dove straight through the glass pane of Jessup's door. As the thick, jagged glass shattered around him, he heard the Captain shouting "It's a hit!"

Callahan slammed down among the debris of the destroyed door as Jessup, Whitelaw, and the Stilino brothers leaped up in shocked surprise.

Then everybody started shooting at him.

CHAPTER

Eleven

He didn't feel the pain of smashing through the door. He didn't hear the rending, shattering crash of the vicious trick. Drowning out everything were Patterson's words filling Callahan's entire brain.

"He can tap into the computers. He can change anything on anyone."

The North Beach cops couldn't be in the Program's employ. But through the Program's influence and the government funding, the police could be convinced that Harry was a dangerous enemy of state and country.

It made no difference how Carr had pulled it off. He could have bribed them, he could have played on their patriotism, or he could have pulled a "Serpico"—saying that Harry was going to blow the whistle on some crooked cops: maybe them.

However he did it, the important thing was that it had worked. Callahan had been set up and was right in the middle of a cross fire between the good guys and the bad.

Uslan had tripped him as he threw him forward, and, with Dobbin's brutal pressure contributing, Harry was unable to keep on his feet. That might have spared his life, initially.

He dove through the glass and fell across the wooden section of the door, splintering it under his weight. He landed inside the office as most of the entrance fell all around him.

If the cops had waited a second before shooting, the Stilinos might have pumped him full of lead where he lay. As it was, they were too busy returning the cops' fire to ventilate Callahan.

It seemed as though the Captain was hoping Harry would be "accidentally" wiped out in the cross fire. But the Inspector knew too much to stand up. He forced his body forward, twisting and rolling farther into the office.

The cops in the hall both had Colt .357 Python revolvers. The Stilino brothers each pulled out a Safari Arms Enforcer .45 automatic, a sawed-off version of the larger Matchmaster, complete with finger-groove grips and hooked trigger guard.

As all four men started firing at once, what was left of the door was splintered by the high-calibre bullets. Harry didn't try to recover. He just kept twisting out of the way like a worm trying not to get stepped on.

Jessup ducked behind his desk and came up holding a sawed-off twelve-gauge Mossberg 500 slide-action shotgun with an eight-shot tubular magazine. He let go with his first blast, ripping off whatever was left of the door after Harry went through it.

Even Whitelaw got into the act, dumping open his briefcase on the floor and scooping up a Llama small-frame automatic. Capable of firing either .22, .32, or .380 rounds, it cost anywhere from two hundred and fifty to fifteen hundred dollars. Just the kind of weapon a diamond broker would use.

And he was ready to use it on Callahan. He saw his opportunity to shoot the closest thing to him, which happened to be the desperately crawling Harry.

The Inspector reached above him and grabbed the leg of the card table the Stilinos had set up in front of Jessup's desk. With a twisting tug, Harry threw it at Whitelaw.

Everything atop the table scattered to the left wall, including papers and a handful of gems. Whitelaw went down beneath the thin hunk of furniture, beaten back by surprise more than anything else.

The Llama fired anyway, the bullet disappearing into the wooden floor in front of Harry's stomach. Callahan rolled in Whitelaw's direction as the booming chaos continued around him. He jumped on top of the overturned table, with the diamond merchant beneath.

That put him in view of Adam Stilino, who was stupid enough to change his aim toward Harry. At that moment, a slug from Uslan's gun took him in the stomach. He bent over, the bullet meant for Callahan's brain snapping off a table leg. Then he tripped over his own weakened feet and fell backward.

Harry took the time to pull out his Magnum, slipping it between his torso and the table. He pulled the trigger once, sending a .44 slug through Whitelaw's struggling form. That quieted him down for good.

Neither Francis nor Avery was happy with the way things were turning out. Roaring that he would take care of the guys in the hall, Jessup sicced the unwounded Stilino on Callahan. Harry twisted around, the Magnum fully out as Francis pivoted to get a better shot.

The two men fired through Jessup's spinning shotgun loads, sparks flying as the lead missiles smashed through the spreading twelve-gauge pellets. Stilino's round went through the hem of Harry's coat

and between his legs. Callahan's Magnum shot true, ripping open Francis's chest.

The second Stilino flew backward, smashing into the opposite wall and bringing down the various plaques and diplomas Jessup had hung. Uslan took that moment to try to enter the room, and Avery paid him by letting him have a shotgun blast across the face.

The detective stopped being black and became red as the hunk of speeding pellets turned his head into hamburger. He went down hard on his side as Harry moved the Magnum over to the shotgun wielder.

Adam got up and in the way just as Callahan pulled the trigger. The wounded Stilino danced away, the hole in his waist joined by a gaping rip in his shoulder. The .44 attack pushed him right through the window behind Jessup's desk.

Stilino's ruined middle dipped over the sill and he somersaulted out onto the fire escape. Even then, his mangled body didn't get any rest. As the broken glass smashed down, more bullets sliced up—many whining off the metal fire-escape slats, but some thudding into the already punctured target.

Jessup pivoted the shotgun barrel so that it yawned in front of Harry. Callahan dived forward. The blast ripped off the corner of Jessup's own desk. Having learned a good lesson with the table, the cop didn't stop there. Crouched in front of the splintered furniture, he grabbed the bottom of the desk and threw it.

Jessup dodged, shooting his desk again as it flew by and smashed into the wall. Captain Dobbin jumped into the doorway. Harry's gun came up. The fence didn't know who to shoot first, so he didn't shoot anybody. Callahan and Dobbin shot him at the same time.

The .357 and .44 bullets combined to mangle Jessup's head and shoulders. The top of his skull tore open like a sardine tin and erupted. The shotgun dumped its load into his feet, tearing off all ten toes and most of his instep, but he was beyond feeling any pain by that time.

The last Goldfarb murderer toppled forward, whatever was left of his brain spilling out of his open skull as he hit the floor.

Steam from the blood and gun smoke rose to the ceiling, revealing two men pointing guns at each other. Dobbin was in the doorway, his .357 aimed down at Harry. Harry's Magnum barrel was centered between the Captain's eyes.

"Moment-of-truth time," Callahan said. "I've got no quarrel with you, and I'm guessing whatever you heard about me is a lie. So you've got a choice. We can play out this Mexican stand-off thing or we can

go back to the station house."

Harry watched the Captain's face. He read things in it. His expression said that he knew of "Dirty" Harry's reputation and that he was torn about deciding what to do. First, because he wasn't sure what he was doing, and second, because he was sure that Harry was a better shot.

"I'll make it easy for you," Harry said. He let go of his own gun.

The .44 Magnum fell to the office floor with a heavy, echoing thud. It bounced slightly, fell over onto its side, and slid two inches. Dobbin looked at it in astonishment, then up at Harry. This time his face showed respect and belief.

The Captain smiled slightly and started lowering his own gun. Then his back exploded.

"Shit." Harry couldn't keep the word from ripping out of his throat as the Captain was blasted from behind with what seemed to be a firing-squad's-worth of lead. It tore up his back and flank, dicing and shredding the skin and muscle, beneath his clothes.

Dobbin tried to stay upright, the shock wanting to root him to the spot, but the point-blank assault drove him forward, his legs unable to keep up with the force of the bullets' blows. He looked at Harry helplessly, as if to apologize for the mistake and for his own stupidity, but it was too late.

He fell on his face, dead before he hit the floor. His Colt Python slithered away from him, seemingly like the snake it was named after.

Harry jumped forward, his right hand reaching for the dropped Magnum, but three bullets beat him to it, surrounding the gun like guards.

The words came afterward, but they were hardly necessary. The bullets had done all the talking for him. "Hold it"

Harry looked up to see the Grand View Park Apartments' superintendent standing in the door. Cradled in his hands was a silenced Walther MP nine-millimeter parabellum submachine gun.

Although it was the same face and same body, the man looked different. It was the way he carried himself. He wore a dark-blue running suit with red and green piping, as well as blue Adidas on his feet.

Harry leaned back from the fallen Magnum. "Fitting you should be using a German gun," he commented.

"Big man," the super said derisively. "Keep talking, asshole. That's why I came up here. To see what the smart guy wanted put on his

tombstone."

The conversation was interrupted by a whistle from downstairs. "Yeah?" the super answered it, without taking his eyes off Harry.

"Everything okay?" another voice called up to him.

"Yeah," the super replied. "Keep your shirt on. It'll all be over in a second." He said that last part mostly for Harry's benefit, watching for a reaction.

"Perfect, huh?" Harry said, figuring that as long as he was talking, he was still alive. "The crooks killed the cops, but not before all of them die too, huh?"

"Exactly," the super agreed. "But first, you and me got to have a little chat."

"About what?"

"About where D. Patterson—Apartment 4-B—is."

"What for?"

The super didn't like Harry's flippant attitude. He pushed the vicious little Walther in front of him and raised its nose. "You can die fast. Or it can seem like you'll never die," he promised. "I've got all night, Inspector. It's your decision."

Harry seemed to think about it from his sitting position on the floor. His eyes drifted to the one corner of the room which wasn't splattered with blood or guts. Then his head moved slightly as if making a choice. He looked back at the super.

"Darers go first," he said.

The left side of his coat billowed outward, a hunk of cloth around the pocket ripped off, and the Browning Hi-Power's nine-millimeter bullet slammed into the super's chest.

Because of his position and the gloom in the office, the super couldn't really have seen that Harry's left hand was inside the slash in his coat, reaching for the waist-holstered automatic.

The super flew back, his arms wide, his back smashing into the lead-riddled frame of the office door. His Walther submachine gun slipped out of his flaccid hand and slid across the floor.

There was no silencer on Callahan's gun, so the Browning's blazing report could be heard throughout the building. Even before the super fell to the floor, his associates were racing up the stairs.

Harry was waiting for them. Right after pulling the Browning's trigger, he was on his feet, his free hand throwing the long coat wide open and hauling out the Mac machine gun from underneath.

As he ran for the door the super was stretched out under, the coat flaps flew back, revealing the Magnum in its shoulder holster, the Browning holster on Harry's left hip, and the Mac-harness across his front.

Harry slammed against the left side of the door frame as two men—looking for all the world like SWAT troopers—stormed up the stairs. It was a clear shot right across the landing.

Harry didn't waste the Mac's bullets. He snapped off two more shots from the Browning's fourteen-bullet clip, catching each man right where they lived. They crumpled as if felled by poison gas.

Callahan moved quickly into the hallway, the automatic in his left hand, the Mac in his right. As he reached the elevator bank, one set of sliding doors opened, revealing Detective Bluth lying on the car's floor.

His eyes and mouth were both open, and he had a red third eye in the middle of his forehead which was leaking crimson tears. Somehow, it seemed like an open invitation of some sort, so Harry took it.

He stepped into the elevator doorway, leaned against the closing doors, and fired two bursts from the Mac into the car's ceiling. He ripped the bullets across the roof in an X pattern. To his savage satisfaction, he heard one grunt and one scream.

The trapdoor in the elevator ceiling caved in and the torso of a Program man fell out, his tongue lolling out of his bloody mouth. Harry planted a nine-millimeter round through this nose.

Callahan moved back so that the sliding elevator doors could close as the man's brains began to drool down the car's back wall. For good measure, Harry turned and decorated the stairway door with Mac rounds just to make sure no one was considering an ambush on the other side.

He wrenched the now-empty clip out of the submachine gun and rammed in another from his coat pocket as he strode toward the obstruction. He kicked it open and started running down the steps.

"Come on," he heard himself grunting. "I'm waiting. Come and get me. Come on."

The cop tore across the first-floor landing, away from the lobby. He found an office directly under Jessup's and kicked in the door. He strode quickly across the space, and went directly to the far window.

He took only a moment to holster the Browning before he grabbed a chair from behind a desk and tossed it through the glass. The barrel of the Mac immediately followed, and its bullets started dotting the alley

floor before the chair even hit.

The man who had killed Rodriguez danced back, the hurtling lead playing the tune. The other Program assassins retreated quickly as Harry pulled himself out onto the fire escape while still shooting. He let up on the trigger only when they disappeard around the corner.

But the battle wasn't over for him, not even then. Driven by a maniacal desire to end it once and for all, Harry jumped over the fire-escape railing, hit the ground one floor below, and rolled to his feet, running.

He had just gotten to the Spanish cop's body when he heard the car engine come to life from the other side of the building. The Program was cutting its losses and pulling out. That gave Callahan no satisfaction. Remembering that it was Rodriguez's dark-green Pontiac, Harry kneeled and pulled the keys out of the corpse's pocket.

He got a good look at the Program vehicle as he reached the street. Trust it to be a van, and a deep red one at that. Dr. Carr was seeing to it that his men went first class. Harry didn't care how they went, as long as he could make their final destination the morgue.

He ran to the late cop's Pontiac and got the thing unlocked and started before the van was able to get a full block away. Harry burned rubber and clipped the back of the Captain's car as he pulled into the street. Dobbin was in no condition to care anymore.

The van took a hard right on Stockton Street and Harry followed suit. Far ahead was the glittering neon cage of Columbus Avenue. As they passed Broadway and Vallejo, heading right for Columbus, Harry pulled the radio mike out from under Rodriguez's dashboard.

"Inspector 71, Inspector 71," he said into the mike, controlling the speeding car with one hand. "Report a number fourteen; officer in trouble. Columbus Avenue south of Washington Square. Officer in need of assistance. Be on the lookout for a dark red van heading in that direction; occupants armed and dangerous, over."

Harry dropped the mike when the controller started asking for details. He needed both hands to swerve in and out of the traffic that always seemed to congest San Francisco's answer to Forty-second Street and the Combat Zone. Columbus Avenue had the look, sound, feel, and soul of a ten-dollar hooker.

Harry tore the car in and out of tight spots, but for every sudden stop he had to make, the van was having twice as much trouble. It was bigger, wider, and taller than the Pontiac.

Finally, it pulled past the Columbus Avenue intersection, but not before Callahan had gotten almost right behind it. They both took off

like teen-age drag racers on Sunset Boulevard.

The X-rated pleasures were immediately left behind, as if the Lord himself had cut them off at the corner. On three sides of the sin oasis was Little Italy, and it was Italian with a vengeance. Tomato sauce and Provolone hung in the air like smog.

The van made a fast left on Filbert Street, trying to shake the cop tail off. Harry wasn't having any of it. He came up fast right behind them as they were taking the turn, and broke off the right side of their rear bumper.

As soon as the cars got on the straightaway, the rear doors of the van flew open. Callahan got a look at the six masked men inside, just before two of them opened up on the Pontiac with the M-16s.

Harry couldn't tell whether the windshield cracked into a thousand Chiclets first, or if he ducked first. And, as long as he wasn't dead, he didn't care. But the bullets riddled the engine and drove through the dashboard as well.

The police radio sparked and broke onto the floor, one of the piston rods drove through the carburetor and into the passenger seat, and the left-front shock absorber broke off and drove itself up through the floor.

The steering wheel wrenched itself out of Harry's hand and spun of its own volition. In response, the Pontiac spun three times down the street, tipped up on its side wheels, then stopped. It fell hard, back onto the street, flattening the rear tire.

Callahan threw open the door on the second bounce. He still refused to let the van get away. He slithered out onto the road, rolled clear of the crippled auto and emptied the Mac's clip at the back of the Program vehicle.

Whether or not he did any damage was a moot point. As the van raced down the otherwise quiet street lined with three-story townhouses, toward the next intersection, two police cars appeared on that crossing street, blocking their escape.

The van swerved onto the empty sidewalk, smashed through a picket fence into a small yard, and crashed into the corner of the building. Harry was instantly on his feet, running toward the crash, but he was still too far away to prevent what happened next.

Thinking that the accident was enough to subdue whoever was inside the van, the interrupting officers exited their own cars without the proper degree of cover. So, when the Program killer came leaping through the van's windshield, they weren't prepared for his lethal onslaught. Whether he broke the windshield with bullets or with his

body, Harry had no way of knowing. All he knew was that the man came shooting out like a human cannonball. He came out shooting.

The cops went down like harvested wheat in front of the man's chugging, silenced Uzi. As they fell, the van's side doors opened, releasing the five other assassins. They forced Harry face-down with more M-16 fire as they headed for the patrol cars.

Harry watched in frustration as they knocked the dead and wounded policemen aside. Two of them got in one car and four in the other. The cars started to move in opposite directions.

Harry pounded his fist on the asphalt. He couldn't let them get away now. But when he felt the pain from his frustrated punch go up his arm, he realized that an empty hand needed a weapon to fill it.

As the police cars started rolling, the Browning was in one hand and his Magnum was in the other. He was still on his stomach on the road, but that was a perfect angle. With anguished rage supporting his aim, Harry pumped the high-speed, high-temperature bullets into the crashed van's gas tank.

The Program vehicle exploded, sending hunks of burning debris spinning through the side windows of one of the patrol cars just as it was passing. Harry heard the satisfying screams of the assassins even from where he was. Without waiting for further reaction, he scrambled to his feet and raced to the spot.

The other police car had escaped unscathed, since it was moving away from the van. Callahan saw it turning the corner up at Chestnut Street. But the first car was practically alongside when the van erupted. Harry made a wide circle around the burning wreck to see the affected patrol car nestled against a wall across the street.

They hadn't had a chance to get going very fast, so all the damage was to one headlight and to the interior. Harry came forward as one of the killers stumbled out of the front seat, his hair in flames.

Harry snuffed out the man's flame with one Magnum bullet. The man jumped in place and dropped on legs that didn't work anymore.

Callahan cautiously looked in the cop car's side window. The man within was contending with a hunk of sizzling shrapnel which had buried itself in his lap. He saw Harry at the same moment that Callahan saw him.

The M-16 was too unwieldy to maneuver in the seat. The Inspector's .44 had all the room in the world, outside. Harry fired through the open window, finishing the work the shrapnel had started. The killer's crotch burst into flames as his head burst all over the far window.

Harry wrenched open the door and dragged the man out. Taking off

his coat, he wrapped it around his arm, then swept and stamped out the other pockets of flame inside the singed patrol car.

When he turned, the occupants of the building next to which the van had exploded, as well as most of the rest of the neighborhood, were looking out of their windows with trepidation.

Seeing that they were all right, Harry got into the stalled police car and turned the key. It would take more than a slight collision and a nearby explosion to kill all the horsepower in the San Francisco patrol cars, the Inspector marveled. The engine coughed and then screeched to life.

Harry slammed the car into reverse and moved back from the wall, dropping pieces of broken headlight as he went. Flooring the gas pedal, he executed a 180-degree turn. Now he was in his police element.

The Magnum and the Browning were in their holsters. The Mac was on the seat beside him. All the ammunition he'd need was in his jacket pockets. He had four more killers to take off the street before the night was out.

CHAPTER

Twelve

Harry had no problem finding them. His problem was what to do once he did.

The search was quick and vicious. Harry had glimpsed the car number stenciled on the side as the vehicle pulled away from the van wreck. He had determination on his side, and an encyclopedic knowledge of the San Francisco streets.

Like a veteran taxi driver, he knew which roads would be congested, which streets were one-way, and which thoroughfares were clear. If the assassins got on Chestnut, they could go straight through to Sansome or the Embarcadero. Both could take them almost directly to the freeway system.

Harry went straight down Powell Street, took a left on Vallejo, and cut them off, sirens screaming all the way. With both hands sliding all over the steering wheel, he didn't have the time or inclination to call in another alert.

Their grills practically kissed as he came roaring onto the Embarcadero. The patrol car filled with the Program men swerved to avoid him, braked, then slipped behind him to turn onto Jackson—heading back into the main section of town.

Harry sped one block farther and skidded west onto Washington, moving parallel to the other car. Playing it safe, he took another quick right on Front and came up behind them at the next intersection.

By this time, both their sirens were screaming, clearing the late-night streets. But that didn't keep the killers' guns inside the auto. As Harry tried to pull up alongside, the two men in the back poked their rifle barrels out the back window.

Callahan braked abruptly and swung the responsive car to the other side of the road. Straightening it as the men in the back seat tried to compensate their aim, he reached for the Mac beside him.

"Two can play at that game," he murmured, the soft words counterpoint to the rubber-melting ferocity of the car chase.

Harry pulled the steering wheel in the other direction just as it seemed the duo of gunmen had a bead on him. The damaged patrol

car moved back to the right side, looking like the wagging tail of a dog. As he zigzagged, he brought the Mac up and dotted the vehicle in front with the parabellum ammo.

The full burst had a devastating effect. The lead car shot off to the right as the Program men ducked for their lives. The driver lost control of the car as it jumped the curb at Mason Street. It roared across the sidewalk and into the yard of the Fairlawn Hotel Tower.

The doorman leaped out of the way as the police car slammed in between two parked taxis. The bellboys and guests scattered as they saw the auto racing up the front ramp.

Harry pulled his car to the side of the street and braked as the first car smashed through the Fairlawn's picture window and into the lobby. The car's spinning rear tires ripped up the sumptuous carpet as it barreled across the room and slammed into the reception counter.

Callahan jumped out of his car, digging into his coat for another Mac clip. There were none left. He threw the submachine gun back into the patrol car's front seat and ran for the ruined façade of the luxury hotel, pulling the Browning from the holster on his belt.

He made it to the destroyed window just as a bellhop was approaching the smoking, stationary car which was half-buried in the reservations room.

"Stay back!" Harry warned loudly, brandishing his automatic. That was another cue for hell to break out all over again.

A masked man appeared in the nonexistent rear window of the crashed police car, his M-16 pointed directly at Callahan. The man fired, killing the bell captain who had hurried toward Harry the moment he appeared.

The dying hotel employee dived forward, tackling the Inspector. Both went down as the Program killers began slipping out of the car like maggots leaving a skeleton.

The man framed in the back window pulled himself out and tried to shoot Harry again while standing on the hood. The bellboy who had been warned off by the cop threw a suitcase at him, knocking the gun aside as the killer pulled the trigger.

The bullets shattered a mirrored column and sent a standing ashtray jerking into the air. Harry stayed under the bleeding, drooling, defecating dead man but fired back with the nine-millimeter automatic. The bullet whined by the killer as he jumped off the trunk and followed the two other masked assassins into the main body of the hotel.

Callahan pushed himself from under the corpse and went after

them. Before he turned the corner, he saw that the car's driver was lying across the steering wheel, his chest crashed against it. The ski-like mask had been torn so that Harry could see his open, mangled eyes, and the blood pouring out of his nose and nearly toothless mouth.

The crash must have smashed him against the windshield and dashboard, while the others could have cushioned themselves the way he had twice previously. A sudden thought of Patterson drove him on. He refused to let these amoral murderers get away with it.

The Fairlawn Hotel Tower yawned in front of him as he came around the corner. The structure was designed with a hollow lobby that had circular balconies built into the walls. Below the main floor was a tall plaza with fountains, cafés, and stores. Moving among everything were glass-enclosed elevators which rose and dropped majestically on two tracks.

Into this civilized environment erupted a trio of masked gunmen. As Harry sped around from reception, the last killer was vaulting over the main floor railing. Harry whipped out his .44 and fired like a Wild West gunman.

His instinct with the Magnum was impeccable. The high-calibre lead caught the third killer in the back, just as he was beginning to drop. It spun him lengthwise, making him a whirling missile which smashed into a shallow tile fountain.

The foam-flecked water splashed onto surrounding tables as late-night diners ran for cover. Within moments, red liquid began to mingle with the blue, until it started pumping out from the main water jets.

The last two killers split up, hoping to double their chances. One moved into the shadows as Harry jumped off the main-floor balcony and landed on the plaza level. The other stood his ground amid a patch of potted trees, letting off a burst of semi-automatic rifle fire as Callahan got his balance.

The bullets tore up the ceramic and plastic floor covering as Harry shielded his head and ran into a clothing store. The gunman was inspired to move forward, blasting the picture windows as Harry ran among the perfectly tailored mannequins.

The dummies shattered and fell—arms, legs, and heads ripped off—as the killer matched Harry's progress through the front of the store. Callahan didn't bother to shoot back, since the broken glass that cascaded like a crystalline waterfall afforded him all the cover he needed.

At the last second—before he reached the shop's far wall—he risked jumping through the falling shards to gain the cover of a stairway. From there, he returned the fire with the Browning, driving the gunman back to the protection of an open-front Walden Books store.

Harry jumped from the stair cover, rolled, and came up behind a garbage can, shooting all the while. The Program gunman returned the favor from behind a rack of horror books. The latest tales of tortured teenagers ripped asunder in the wake of the violence and the pages fluttered to the ground like so many dead birds.

Desperate and frustrated, the killer broke from the store, trying to nail Harry in a frontal attack. He threw a display shelf of the latest historical rape novel in front of him and fired through it.

Harry kicked the refuse receptacle forward, spilling garbage everywhere as he ran to meet the assassin head-on, the gun in each hand blazing. It was like a game of "chicken"—but instead of cars racing toward each other, two armed men seemed to be intent on speeding up their showdown.

The Program killer gave up first, pivoting to the side and trying to make the cover of a thick, wooden door. Taking his attention off Harry was his worst mistake. It gave Callahan time to push the Magnum out in front of him and fire.

The killer was stopped in his tracks, and pushed back by a bullet in his side. He lost his balance and fell in the front hall of the Country Squire Restaurant. By the time he was able to get to his feet, Harry was framed in the doorway.

The man tried to bring his rifle around. Harry shot him with the Browning. This bullet hit him in the right shoulder, spinning him into the salad bar. The greens spun overhead as the killer sought to keep his feet. He knocked aside tubs of dressing, the oily colors mixing together on the floor.

The killer stumbled back, patrons moving far out of his way as he pathetically attempted to escape with two holes in his torso. He crashed into a table and nearly fell, but something kept him on his feet. The Inspector followed inexorably behind—making sure no one else would be hurt, but keeping his distance. The rattlesnake could still strike, even in its death throes.

When the snake managed to face Harry again, the cop was standing with the .44 held right out in front of him. The message was clear. The gunman ignored it. He tried to bring his own gun to bear. Harry shot him in the head.

The killer's neck, and what was left on top of it, snapped back, and

he fell on the grill set up in the center of the circular restaurant. Harry heard the sizzle of the gunman's shirt and of flesh baking, before he pulled him off the grill and dropped the corpse on the floor.

"Bon appetit," he told the dead man.

Callahan let his exhaustion catch up with him as he walked back out into the plaza section of the hotel. He had forced himself to accept the escape of the last man. At least he would bring the all-too-clear message back to Carr. Harry Callahan knows where D. Patterson is and he's not telling. And he'll send every Program operative to hell, first.

The Inspector had put one foot on the stairway back to the lobby, when the steps were riddled by more bullets. Harry threw himself back as the lead ripped up the stone staircase.

He fell and slid across the slick floor until his head hit a table leg. Looking up, he viewed a hellish sight. The last gunman had been waiting for him in the open-air elevator. He had been waiting for Harry to press the up button, so that when the doors opened, he could have blasted the cop.

He had been waiting with a carful of innocent hotel guests.

And when Harry didn't do the logical thing—when an exhausted Harry took the stairs, against all odds—the enraged gunman had pressed an upper-floor button and rose above it all. Rose above it to shoot down at the amazed Inspector.

The elevator kept rising, and the gunman kept firing as the glass in front of him cracked and fell like jagged rain. Harry got to his feet and started running, the bullets following him wherever he went.

He got a momentary respite when the last killer's weapon ran dry. Harry raised his Magnum to shoot back, but stopped in mid-motion. He couldn't shoot. No matter how good he was, at this range and angle, he couldn't chance hitting one of the killer's hostages.

And even if he nailed the bastard perfectly, he also knew that the high-powered rounds would probably go right through the killer and into an innocent victim. Callahan had to wait and look for a way out while the murderer reloaded.

The shooting started again as the car continued to rise. Harry dodged, twisted, turned, and ran, looking like a ballet dancer on speed. He realized that the killer was just toying with him now. He was sadistically enjoying the predicament he had forced the cop into.

Finally, Callahan managed to gain safety behind the stairway he had originally started up. It gave him time to catch his breath and

think. But that time was cut short.

"Callahan," he heard. "Callahan, get out here or I start killing them and dropping their bodies one by one." The gunman's voice echoed out in a singsong over the sobs of fear from the elevator's passengers.

Harry jumped, grabbed the banister and pulled himself onto the stairway. He ran up as the bullets ran up after him. He made it under the lip of the main floor balcony just before the rounds caught up with him.

"Callahan!" The voice was stronger and harsher this time. "I told you I'd kill them!" Then the man returned to his condescending, sarcastic tone. "Just come out and take your medicine and they won't be hurt."

Harry looked at the lobby. The dust had settled, and many of the hotel's employees were gathered there with the petrified security staff. None of them had ever experienced anything like this before. They all looked at him helplessly. He knew how they felt.

Harry stepped out from his cover just as the elevator stopped on the thirteenth floor.

The doors opened behind the gunman. Naturally, the terrified passengers began streaming out. The killer whirled. "Don't move," he barked. "Everybody stay just where you are or you'll die."

Harry looked up at the scene. The .44 snapped forward as he was realizing that the angle was perfect. As soon as his elbow locked his arm straight, he pulled the trigger.

All those hours on the target range paid off with that one shot. It went up all twelve floors, entered the gunman's head at the top of his spine, and exited out the top of his skull. The only other thing it hit was the elevator's ceiling.

As the passengers watched, the top of the man's head split open. It was a horrible sight—but better than dying.

Harry left before his own force caught up with him. He didn't feel like explaining tonight. Tomorrow, there'd be the reams of paperwork, the triplicates to be done in triplicate, but tonight he just wanted to get back to the room in the shadow of the freeway where Patterson was.

He left it to the approaching patrolmen to take care of the immediate details, then slowly made his way back to the damaged patrol car. With a Magnum in one hand and a Browning in the other, no one considered stopping him.

No one but the superintendent of the Grand View Park Apartments.

He came out of the shadows behind the car as Harry tossed the handguns into the front seat. He first smashed Callahan in the kidneys, then grabbed his hair and slammed his head on the patrol car's ceiling.

"We learn our lesson quick, asshole," he said in the nearly-unconscious Inspector's ear. "After all the men you murdered in 4-B, we started wearing flak jackets."

Before anyone could do anything about it, the man with the bullet hole in the chest of his jogging suit shoved the Inspector into the car and drove off.

CHAPTER

Thirteen

No wonder the super had looked different at Jessup's office. No wonder the killer had taken so long to die in the Fairlawn restaurant. They had all been wearing bulletproof vests under their jackets.

This realization did Harry absolutely no good at all, as everybody he had shot in the chest during the last few hours watched the superintendent beat him to a pulp.

Actually, the only one available was the killer who had stumbled out of the police car with his head on fire. And he was in no condition to really enjoy the show. In fact, he was lying on a cot, moaning.

His head looked like an overcooked marshmallow, but the super couldn't very well bring him to the hospital, considering the situation, as well as the fact that he might reveal something in his delirium.

So he lay groaning in pain, as Harry tried to keep himself from doing the same. It wasn't easy. The super was angry, impatient, and extremely vindictive. He had kept coshing Callahan as they drove back to Nineteenth Avenue—seemingly to warm up.

All of Harry's guns were in the far corner of the Grand View cellar apartment, which, seemed miles away from where the cop hung. The grunts the human marshmallow made sounded in harmony with the creaks made by the crossbar Callahan was attached to.

"You were too fast for me to kill, back at Jessup's place," the super admitted, putting on the thick, black leather gloves. "Every time I got a clear shot at you, you kept moving. Well, you're going to stay still now."

He walked to the middle of the cellar studio, surveying his handiwork. The cop was literally hung up by his wrists, to a beam twelve feet off the floor—naked.

"Following you was easy," the super continued, flexing his fingers and smiling. "I just walked behind the wreckage." He looked at the Inspector's already bruised, battered body, admiring the aged scars that revealed the trials of his career up till now.

"Big, tough guy," the super scolded. "Think you're really something, don't you? Well, let's see how long it takes me to make you nothing."

Then he started in. The first part was simple. Taking a reed cane, he whipped the cop.

It was a scene out of a childhood melodrama come to painful life. Harry remembered his school days when the teacher would take a hickory stick to someone's backside or a ruler to somebody's knuckles. He remembered the sound of those whips coming in for the kill. He remembered that whipping sound as being the worst part of it.

His memory lied. The whipping was the worst part. And the super was an experienced, practiced torturer. He was very particular about where he placed the stick, and when.

He was very practical in his approach, and proud of it. So proud, in fact, that he lectured Harry on the subject while he beat him.

"You see," he said, "we don't want to hit your chest, or it might start the heart palpitating. You could get a seizure and die that way. We don't want that. And we don't want to go for a cheap shot in your balls, or your blood might overheat, causing you to faint. I want you up and aware."

So he went for the painful, not permanently damageable parts. Like the ribs, the back of the legs, the fleshy part of the back, the shoulder blades, and the armpits.

He took his time and carefully aimed and executed each blow with all his strength. The pain was beyond belief.

It was a great shock to him just how much pain his body could tolerate. There was a breaking point, but he hadn't reached it yet. That didn't make the search for it any more tolerable.

As much pain as he felt, however, he did not feel fear or dread. He knew just what this man could do to him, and that sooner or later, one way or the other, it had to end. Death was easy. Working up to it was the hard part.

He kept pounding Callahan until the cop was swinging back and forth. The crossbar kept creaking, and the burned man kept moaning. What Harry didn't do was cry out. The super had told him at the outset that the walls were soundproof.

So, if it wouldn't do him any good, he wasn't going to let it do the super any good, either. Even in ignominious torture, Callahan maintained a certain stubborn dignity. The bastard could kill him, but nothing would make him cry.

The super wanted him to cry out. The Program enforcement director wanted to make Harry pay for his men's deaths. Battering or killing wasn't enough.

The super had to break him. He had to break him the way he had

broken dozens of the enemy in Southeast Asia. Already, Harry had withstood abuse half of them had cracked under.

It was the super's heart that began to race; it was his blood that started to boil. He wanted Callahan to crawl. But Harry wasn't playing his part. He was taking terrible punishment without a sound.

Callahan might have liked to know how the super felt. It wasn't a false pride that kept him from reacting, it was an acceptance of the situation.

He had known he was in for it from the moment the super's knuckles had sunk into his kidneys back at the hotel, so he had spent all of his intervening moments hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst.

Distantly, clinically, almost objectively, Harry mentally examined his damage. His wrists were corded so tightly that the skin was almost gone beneath the ropes, blood oozing down his upraised arms.

His shoulders were almost out of their sockets, the ligaments stretched to the breaking point. He could handle his weight pretty well for a while there, but after the sixth minute, he could feel it. After fifteen minutes, his muscles began to scream.

Each whip stroke actually felt as if the super were using a machete instead of a cane. It wasn't a little sting. It was a deep, solid wound that numbed the rest of the body, but not the strike point.

Enough of this pain would soon turn his mind into steel wool. The super wouldn't wait for him. He wanted the lousy cop to howl, to beg for mercy.

The torturer's strokes became more frequent, his blows harder. Incredibly, the harder he hit, the less pain Harry felt. Without the finesse, the strike points became as shocked as the rest of the numbed area.

Realizing that he was losing it, the super hurled the cane away from him. It clattered against the wall and fell to the thick pile carpet.

The stopping was almost worse than the whipping. Then the crawling anguish was replaced by a stinging buzz which threatened to sweep over Harry's head and put out his lights—at least for a while.

That was prevented by the super picking up a carton of sodium chloride, pouring the salt into his hand, and rubbing it all over Callahan's torso.

The effect was like dumping a container of water filled with razor blades on someone to wake him up. It did the trick. Callahan's mind went into overload for a second. His brain told his blinded eyes that he had died and gone to hell.

“When it rains, it pours,” the super said with vicious whimsy, breathing deeply. “Don’t look so shocked. Salt is good for you. It prevents infection. It stops the bleeding so you don’t mess up my nice new rug.”

Callahan looked down at himself. It wasn’t his body anymore. It was a raw, welt-covered, livid mass of shrieking, pulpy flesh. He looked back up at his blood-coated arms and couldn’t keep the words inside him anymore.

“Don’t you want to know where Patterson is?” he grunted, his voice barely audible. “I’m about ready to discuss it.”

The super barked out a laugh. “You misunderstand, Inspector. I’m not doing this because I have to. I’m doing it because I want to.”

Outwardly, Harry didn’t react. He didn’t have the strength, and he wouldn’t have, anyway. He didn’t let on that he realized the implications of the super’s statement.

If the man didn’t want to know where Patterson was, it could only mean a couple of things. Either he didn’t care anymore, or he didn’t need to know. And either way, it meant that things were even worse than Harry had initially expected.

At first, the defeatist part of his brain said it didn’t matter if he died. He didn’t want to, and he would do everything he could to prevent it, but it really didn’t matter. There was still Patterson, and when she heard about what had happened to him, she’d talk.

But now, her existence was in doubt. Now, it was absolutely crucial that Harry hold on. The super wasn’t going to make it easy. He looked at Harry’s swinging body for a long, silent moment, then started slugging him. Again, the torture was complete with narration.

“Again, notice which areas I avoid,” the super grunted, between punches to the chin, nose, and eyes. “No blows to the temple or forehead. I don’t want to break your skull or damage your great brain.”

Harry’s head snapped back with every thrust, his face bouncing back with a new swelling each time. He felt his lips mashed, his nose broken, and his brow bleeding.

“And not too hard,” the super said gently. “We don’t want to snap your neck.”

“Don’t we?” Harry wanted to say, but the man’s knuckles cut him off.

The super lowered his aim to sink his fists into Callahan’s stomach. “Now, the abdomen, lower ribs, and upper back,” he explained. “Have to avoid the chest, neck, and kidneys. Those are killing blows.”

The super was enjoying himself, and Harry let him. He took the blows until the super got wrapped up in the fantasy of being a heavyweight contender working out.

Then Harry swung his leg forward to kick the super in the nuts, with all the strength he had left.

Callahan had misjudged his own power. It wasn't enough.

The leg connected solidly, but there wasn't enough behind it. Harry knew it as soon as the super stumbled back, coughing and clutching his balls. His face was red and he was doubled over, but his knees didn't buckle and he didn't collapse.

He stood in place, tears rolling out of his eyes, for a minute, then gingerly rose to his full height.

"I'm glad you did that," he said, with aching relish. "Before, I wanted to break you. I wanted to see your mind snap. Now, I just want to make you die."

He came forward, a meaty fist raised high. The bullet stopped him.

It didn't kill him. It didn't even wound him. It just made him stop and look at the door.

Frank DiGeorgio was standing in it, his smoking police .38 held in both hands. "Hold it right there," he said.

The super ignored him. He ran right for the corner where the Magnum and Browning lay.

"I said freeze!" DiGeorgio shouted, following him with the gun barrel.

The super kept going.

"Shoot him in the head," Harry croaked, his voice hardly there.

"Stop or I'll shoot!" the Sergeant said in disbelief as the torturer reached down for the guns.

"Shoot him in the fucking head," Harry repeated. He couldn't get any volume, in his condition.

The super wrapped his hand around the Browning. He stood up straight. DiGeorgio shot him in the chest from across the room. The super took one step back to cushion the bullet's blow, and then fired back.

The nine-millimeter slug ripped into the door frame, showering the surprised Sergeant with wood splinters. DiGeorgio fell back, tripped, and landed on his back in the hallway.

The super moved forward to finish him off. He kept to the side wall so the cop wouldn't have a shot at him until it was too late. DiGeorgio

pointed his gun very deliberately and pulled the trigger.

The bullet missed the super by a mile, but it killed him anyway. The lead tore through the ropes connecting Harry's wrists to the overhead support beam. Callahan came down, his feet held his weight, he threw himself to the side, twisted, and brought down his arms on either side of the super's head.

Then, it was only a matter of putting his knee in the middle of the man's back, and pulling. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The super's neck stopped where the coarse, thin rope joined Harry's hands.

The super tried bringing the gun around to shoot behind him. Harry was having none of it. He jerked the fat little super around until he felt like he was inside a washing machine. Between that and the hemp-covered flesh crushing his windpipe, the super couldn't line up a shot.

He fired anyway, all the rounds that remained in the fourteen-shell clip. They smashed into the floor, walls, ceiling, and furniture. One pumped into the human marshmallow just before both Harry and the torturer fell on top of the cot. It cracked beneath the combined weight, flattening to the floor.

The super's trigger finger kept contracting, the Browning's pin kept clicking on an empty barrel, and the burned man sighed.

"That's enough, Harry," was the first thing Callahan remembered hearing after that.

He became aware that he was still on top of the super, but the man's finger wasn't twitching anymore.

"All right, Harry, that's enough," DiGeorgio repeated, gently pulling on the Inspector's battered arm. "You don't have to do it anymore. I think he's dead."

The Sergeant was correct. Both the super and marshmallow-head were dead. One way or another, Harry had killed them.

Callahan let himself be taken off the corpse. He sat heavily in front of the cot, trying to get his brain to function without hemorrhaging. Only when DiGeorgio got him in the front seat of his car and wrapped in a blanket was he able to put a whole sentence together.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" was the first thing he could come up with, looking at DiGeorgio as if he were a figment of his fevered, dying mind.

"A long, long time ago," the Sergeant said disgustedly, "in a galaxy

far, far away, you put in a call for assistance. Four cops were killed answering that call, and then we find out that one of the cars those guys drove was parked in the fucking lobby of the Fairlawn hotel. I figured wherever the other car was was where you'd be."

Harry tried to put it together, but it was too much for his battered brain to bear. "Where was the car?" he had to ask.

"Whoever that guy was," DiGeorgio answered, "he was in such a rush to kill you slowly that he parked it inside the apartment's parking lot. The dumb bastard."

Callahan still couldn't understand. If it was in the parking lot underneath the apartment house, then it couldn't be seen from the street.

"Then how did you see it?" he asked, knowing the answer, but unable to put his finger on it.

"When I came back to Patterson's apartment," DiGeorgio said. "Looking for you."

Callahan leaned back and closed his eyes. His brain slowly cleared, revealing a simple memory. Harry had once thought he could be an island; that he could exist without friends and be a man alone. He forgot about that pretentious stupidity.

Without his friends on this one, he would have been dead twice over. For some stupid reason, there were a couple of people in this city who cared about him.

DiGeorgio had had it with the comfortable silence. "Where to, massah?" he asked, hoping Harry would say the hospital.

He was disappointed, but not surprised, by the answer. "My place."

Not only did Harry ignore all of DiGeorgio's protests about going up himself, he walked up all three flights with gun in hand. Only after Harry had checked all of the rooms was the Sergeant able to get him into the lav.

Together, they did the best they could with his facial and torso wounds. By the time he came back into the main area to dress, Harry looked like a one-eyed pirate. A gauze bandage was taped over one eye, there were Band-aid patches on his nose and chin, and his chest was wrapped like a mummy's.

He pulled on a loose shirt and slacks while slipping into some sneakers. Even with the huge welts across his shoulders and under his arms, Harry insisted on painfully pulling on his shoulder holster.

He came back downstairs gingerly, pulling on a warm-up jacket over everything. But, even then, he wouldn't let his partner get him to

the emergency room.

“We’ve got one more stop,” he told him, easing himself back in the car. “Besides,” he grimaced. “The salt stopped the bleeding and prevented infection.”

Harry went up the stairs of the run-down apartment as if he had no wounds. DiGeorgio had to struggle to keep up, but they both made it to the second-floor door at the same time. Harry checked the padlocks. They were still in place. Somehow, that made him feel worse than if the door had been smashed open.

Seized by doubt, and desperate to burn off a little frustration, Harry blasted the two locks out of working condition. A moment later, he wished he hadn’t. Both his arms and his torso did a stirring version of the Death March in three-part painful harmony.

DiGeorgio jumped back in surprise, but then backed up his partner by kicking in the door. The two cops piled into the room. As Harry had dreaded, it was empty.

The Sergeant checked the bathroom while Harry took a beer out of the icebox, leaned against the wall, and tried to unscrew the cap. He had reason to regret the latter two actions as the still-raw welts complained across his upper body.

“Patterson?” DiGeorgio asked, as he came back into the room.

“Patterson,” Harry said, handing him the bottle.

“Shit,” the Sergeant said while easily opening the beer. He handed it back.

Harry considered the bottle, wondering whether Carr would go so far as to poison it. He took a long pull on it anyway, one part of him thinking he might welcome poisoning at this point.

“So what now?” DiGeorgio asked.

The effect of moving his head back to swallow the brew nearly knocked Harry over. His body hadn’t begun to recover from the brutality of his beating. He hadn’t let it, up to now. But, with the confirmation of Patterson’s disappearance, Callahan had let everything catch up with him.

“Now, the hospital,” he said, none too steadily. The beer fell out of his hand, the bottle smashing on the floor.

DiGeorgio helped his partner on a flight of stairs for the second time in his career. “Tough luck about the girl, Harry,” he commiserated. “And today of all days, too.”

Harry was in bad shape, but now he reacted to something that had

been bothering him all night. “There it is again,” he complained. “When Bressler calls me for the bust, he apologizes for the time. When Dobbin gives me the lowdown, he apologizes for the hour. What’s so damn special about it all of a sudden?”

DiGeorgio looked at his partner incredulously. “What planet do you live on, Harry?” he said, with quiet pity. “It’s December, remember? Today is Christmas.”

CHAPTER

Fourteen

Dr. Henry Lester Carr had two men left. Three, counting the mole, but the mole wasn't used for enforcement. After that, if he wanted any more, he'd have to ask his superiors for them. His superiors would ask why. And he couldn't very well tell them that all the rest of his security force was slaughtered by one lone San Francisco cop, could he?

He couldn't tell them how that came to happen, either. Three years of trouble-free research, and then three weeks of total chaos. And still the problem was not solved. The woman was taken care of, but the Inspector was still at large. And as long as he remained free, the Program had something to worry about.

Harry Callahan may have been at large, but he wasn't up and around. The superintendent had seen to that. He had beaten the cop so badly that he was confined to a private room at the S.F. General Hospital, where he had been recuperating for one full work week so far.

Carr wasn't worried about the cop blowing the whistle during that time. He knew no one would believe him without Patterson's corroboration. He was also sure that Harry knew he'd only be making himself more vulnerable to an "accident" by making wild accusations be had no way of proving.

Callahan was already showing signs of erratic behavior. Word had it that he wasn't taking any hospital food. He'd only eat what his partner and immediate superior had brought to him. But the force hierarchy had seen to it that that kind of cushy favoritism was eliminated. The Inspector must be very hungry about now.

All the better, because Carr had reluctantly released his last two men into the field. Their orders were simple. Eliminate Callahan at any cost. Short of the Program's exposure, of course.

Getting into the hospital was easy. It always was, since Carr was on the staff. Besides, the men entered at the start of the "graveyard shift," when even the most dedicated of employees becomes slightly apathetic.

Getting by the nursing staff was child's play. There were no doctors

to speak of. The two men just walked through the halls, side by side, wearing their lab coats and forged IDs, until they came to the private wing.

There was no cop at the door. Sergeant Frank DiGeorgio had demanded one, but the police department heads saw no reason for it —over the objections of Lieutenant Al Bressler. Especially since Inspector Callahan himself denied the need for it.

"Oh, nurse?" one of the men hailed a passing girl. "Could I see you for a moment?"

The little redhead stopped midway past the door, looked up from her medicine chart, then walked over to where the two good-looking young doctors were standing.

"Yes?"

The other Carr man moved toward the door next to Callahan's room, while the first read the girl's tag, "Nurse Nichols, I wonder if you could assist me with the patient in room six?"

"Sure, I guess so," the girl said helpfully. "I've got to give the patients their medications soon, but I can spare a couple of minutes."

"Fine," said the man, taking her by the arm as his partner went into the room adjoining the Inspector's. "Thank you."

Nichols was a shield. Just in case Callahan was waiting for something like this, the killers were going to come at him from two directions and push the girl in first.

As he neared the swinging door, girl in tow, the first man nodded at the second—who was watching for that signal from the next room's doorway. The latter man instantly moved to the connecting door, pulling a silenced Walther PP .380 automatic from his coat pocket.

The first man did the same, as he propelled the girl before him through the front door. She stumbled in and stopped two feet from the bed as the men came in right after, their guns pointed directly at the headboard.

"I don't understand," Nurse Nichols exclaimed, not seeing the men hastily shoving the guns back in their pockets as she stared at the empty bed and around the empty room. "Where's Inspector Callahan?"

Inspector Callahan was in the "Pit of Hell."

He had avoided it until now. Even after the painful purgatory at the hands of the superintendent, he had staved off the worst, thanks to the machinations of his enemy.

The department was convinced that Harry and the North Beach officers had either stumbled into a war between two gangs for the two-and-a-half million dollars worth of diamonds Goldfarb stole, or, the whole thing was a setup by a terrorist group to kill police officers.

The fake histories the Program computer fabricated for each killed assassin saw to that. And, since the cops were already dead, and the diamonds were recovered off the floor of Jessup's devastated office, the department didn't much care which solution the investigating committee decided upon.

Neither did Harry. He had his own problems. First, he had sneaked out of the hospital long before his time. Second, he had borrowed an orderly's outfit. And third, he had stolen an ambulance.

Just as easily as Carr's men got in, Harry had gotten out. He had only waited long enough for DiGeorgio to deliver to him the information he had requested. When he got that, he was gone—as the last pair of assassins discovered.

He had gone to Jackson Square, the three-block area once known as the "Pit of Hell"—the sulphuric center of the infamous Barbary Coast. In the early part of the century, decent citizens didn't set foot on the streets there unless they planned to leave the area in a box.

In mid-century, it mutated into the "International Settlement," which was neither international nor settled. Finally, it was renovated up to its present high standards—an oasis of luxury where there was once only shit and blood.

Harry looked at the sumptuous townhouses with distrust, guiding the ambulance carefully along the cobblestone streets. He passed beautifully designed and realized wrought-iron shutters and Federal-style façades, delicate and tastefully rendered detail work, and perfectly manicured yards.

He stopped the Cadillac meat wagon in front of 425 Gold Street. He got out and ran to a fifteen-foot-high fence consisting of black, spear-shaped bars, sculpted into an elegant design. It also concealed the fact that the house was in a cage.

The door was locked by a buzzer arrangement. A uniformed doorman stood on the other side.

"Can I help you?" he asked Harry, looking at the ambulance with concern.

"What do you think?" Harry asked impatiently. "Open up, I've got to get inside." At least he wasn't lying.

The doorman stammered something about not being told.

"Are you kidding?" Harry exclaimed incredulously. "They're going

to ask your permission for a heart attack?"

"Oh, my God!" the man gasped, but still he didn't clear the way. "But the servants . . ."

"The servants called me," Harry explained quickly. "They didn't call you."

Halfway through the final lie, the man buzzed the gate open. He was picking up the phone on a little table to say the intern was coming up when Harry gave him a straight shot to the jaw.

The doorman's neck snapped back, he dropped the phone, and then dropped himself. Harry caught the phone receiver. He gingerly put it back on its base before leaping up the front steps two at a time.

Before trying the front door, he circled the structure, locating the main phone line and cutting it with the pliers he had told the late Patrolman Petrillo never to be without. Only then did he return to the front door.

He came in quickly and grabbed the first maid he saw. She was walking across the front room with a silver tray, and she was decked out in a classic French maid's outfit. If he had seen her at a costume party, he would have laughed. Here, it just made him feel a little sick.

She was young, dark-haired, with a facial structure that said she probably was French. She only glanced at him when he entered because he marched in with such assurance. She started to worry when he grabbed her around the waist and pulled a huge gun out from under his shirt.

What the unanswered front-gate phone hadn't brought, the clatter of her spilled silver tea service echoing through the first floor did. A man in a three-piece suit appeared from a door on the other side of the foyer. Another man appeared at the top of the spiral staircase at the base of which Harry was holding the girl. Both men started to reach for the sides of their belts.

"Don't," Harry suggested strongly, his Magnum much in evidence. The men didn't but their hands stayed where they had frozen them. They were ready to go at the first opportunity.

"Now you don't really want to hurt the girl, do you?" the one at the top of the stairs said unctuously.

"You notice the gun isn't pointing at her," Harry said flatly. "She's here in case you want to hurt me."

"Why would we want to do that?" the man asked.

"Because the gun isn't pointing at her," Harry reiterated. "Cut the comedy."

“What do you want?” the man on Callahan’s level demanded, expressionlessly.

“Take me to your leader.”

“We can’t do that,” said the one up above.

“I can do it without your help,” Harry reminded them. “You should see me when I’m not being polite.”

The staff saw the error of their ways. Harry herded them all into the study, where the master of the house sat, stunned.

“Down,” Callahan commanded. “On your knees, hands behind your back.”

The butler/bodyguards complied quickly. Harry circled behind them, pulling their small Astra automatics from their hip holsters. He dumped them in the wicker trash container. The maid looked at the owner, not really sure what to do.

“Have you lost your mind?” the homeowner blustered.

“Can it,” Harry suggested. “You’re not in command anymore, Colonel. Dr. Carr took that from you long ago.”

The Program’s mole seemed to sink in his chair as if punched. His sudden silence convinced the girl to act the same as the others. Harry had two nice, shiny pairs of handcuffs for each of the staff. One locked their hands, and the other attached so that their wrists were locked to their imprisoned ankles.

“Complete the package,” Harry suggested, standing in front of the fireplace, his gun pointing in the general direction of everyone else. “Paint the whole picture.”

“You are not to summon help of any kind,” the owner told the trio in bondage. “That is a direct order. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” the men said reluctantly.

“Good,” Harry commented. “Now, come on, we’re going for a little ride.” He took the mole by the arm and propelled him toward the door. Looking back at the struggling bundles on the floor, he couldn’t help himself.

“Je suis regrette,” Harry said to the maid, quietly. She did a double take, then smiled wanly at his apology. Harry swiftly closed the door behind him.

“Put that thing away,” Dr. Carr’s mole said, trying to take command of the situation immediately as Harry hustled him down the stairs.

“Make me, Hux,” Callahan told the man whom he had once known as the BART lush.

“Would you really have used that thing?” the man who had been Ted Huxley asked, as they went out the door.

“If you had played dumb, I would have blown your fucking head off,” Harry promised. “I’ve got nothing more to lose. Now get in.” He held the door of the ambulance open for the man. After he had gotten in, Harry paused to throw the handcuff keys on the doorman’s unconscious body before getting behind the wheel.

“How did you find me?” Huxley asked, once they were speeding along Van Ness Avenue, siren silent.

“It wasn’t easy until I accepted the fact that you were the leak,” Harry said, without taking his eyes off the road. “It just seemed too great a coincidence that the subway drunk I met by chance was Dr. Carr’s connection.”

“When the impossible is eliminated,” Huxley said sadly, “the result, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.”

“Don’t paraphrase Conan Doyle to me,” Callahan warned. “This isn’t some fucking fantasy. Real people are being killed.”

Huxley wasn’t ready to face it yet. “But how did you find me?” he repeated, stressing the last word. “I’m not Ted Huxley.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “You’re also not imaginative enough to come up with a decent pseudonym. Carr’s computer can’t get rid of everything, you know. I had my partner run every variation of the name through our computer and came up with Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lee; retired. It was right on your file—nickname ‘Huck,’ as in Mark Twain. Ed Huck Lee. Really clever, Colonel.”

The military man stared out the passenger window as the city seemed to streak by. From his position, it looked like they were standing still.

“Patterson said it herself,” Callahan continued, verbally kicking himself. “It seemed impossible to gauge the results of the subway tests. Carr needed someone unnoticed, but down in BART all the time, to check reactions to the stuff. And besides myself, only you knew where I was hiding out. Only you knew where I would have stashed Patterson. And, since she didn’t get a chance to see you, you could keep up the fake.”

The ambulance streaked into the parking lot of S.F. General just as the last two Program enforcers got the message to get to Colonel Lee’s house fast. They were charging in that direction as Harry was pushing the man through one of the back doors.

“You must love your position very much,” Harry said with pity, as he shoved the cowed military man through the dark and narrow halls

of the new wing's basement. "You were willing to dress down and stink yourself up to make sure Carr wouldn't cut you off from the easy life."

"I didn't do anything," Lee stammered. "I didn't do anything wrong!"

"No," Harry mocked. "You just stood by and let innocent girls, four good cops, and your own men get killed."

"That wasn't my fault!" Lee maintained as Harry pulled him into a darkened room. "The papers . . . the papers said it was a dishonorably discharged soldier and a terrorist group that did it!"

Harry stood in the doorway, the backlighting from the hall making him a tall, ghostly silhouette. "Strip," he said.

"I didn't know," Lee begged.

"Strip," Harry said again, his tone flat, the .44 Magnum a huge addition on the end of his hand. The old man started taking off his smoking jacket, Izod sweater, and wool slacks.

"If I had known," he blubbered, taking off his Gant shirt, "I never would have told Carr where the girl was."

"Get on the table," Harry directed.

"I swear," Lee promised, pulling his haunches up on the cold table top as Harry approached.

"Lie down."

"Please," the Colonel said, as he drifted back. "Please. I didn't know."

Harry produced straps from under the table with which he quickly secured the retired officer. Following that, he switched on a large diffused examining light, which just barely illuminated his face. From where Lee lay, the Inspector looked satanic.

"I'm not interested in what you don't know," Harry said reasonably. "I want to know what you do." He placed one palm on either side of Lee's body and leaned in. "Where's Dr. Carr's lab?" he asked.

The Colonel stammered. "I—I can't tell you that."

"Where's Dr. Carr's lab?"

"Please understand," Lee immediately pleaded, as Harry's face disappeared from under the light. "It's not me. I would tell you if I could. It's a matter of national secrecy. That information is vital to the security of this entire—"

Lee's words were cut off when the lights went on. He blinked, and the fuzz left his vision.

He was strapped to a table in front of a wall-sized generator to which was connected a tube-like pointer on a movable crane and pulley system.

“This is the laser operating room of the San Francisco General Hospital,” Harry identified. “Four men died here after your Doctor Carr had a junkie go crazy.”

“I had no idea,” Lee swore, shaking his head from side to side fervently.

Harry didn’t know whether to throw up, laugh, or both. This was going to be easier than he thought.

“This surgical laser can only cut as deep as a single scalpel, but it can slice even thinner than the width of a hair. It can make a loaf out of the head of a pin.” Harry had been reading the hospital literature. “It can almost cut the air. Feel that?” Harry had pressed a button and moved the crane tip forward.

Lee looked at his arm. He had felt, and now saw, nothing. Harry pressed down on the side of the man’s forearm with his thumb. A fine thinner than a paper cut appeared. Blood began to color the line red.

“When you have something to say to me, nod,” Harry told him, producing a rubber prod gag he had taken from the electroshock therapy unit and ramming it into Lee’s mouth.

Then he started peeling the Colonel’s skin from his body, square-inch by square-inch.

CHAPTER

Fifteen

It came down to this. One man against one building.

It was a pathetically simple affair. A shoe box turned on its side. There were four windows—two each on the first two floors; none on the third. One window each on the side walls. None on the back.

It sat alone on a street otherwise deserted—a block set for a wrecking ball that never came. A demolition crew put on paid hold until the Program was finished.

Since it was on a blocked street in a condemned block, no one important was around to wonder why it was surrounded by a chain-Iink fence topped with barbed wire. Or why, when the first slum kids managed to climb to the top, the ones who had touched the wire had their hair straightened for two weeks.

Besides, there was never anybody around to ask. Nobody ever came out of the single front door. From what Callahan could see, they didn't need to leave.

Harry stood across the street, the Magnum under his arm, the Browning on his hip, and the Mac loosely held in one hand. He didn't exactly know what he would find inside, but he knew he'd have to find out alone.

If he won, then another blow was struck for his idea of justice. If he lost, well, life went on as before, with no one the wiser.

Everybody was happy. The department had recovered the two-and-a-half million dollars' worth of diamonds, Bressler had closed the file on the BART pusher, DiGeorgio had his family and the holidays, and Colonel Lee had his life.

Lee was less a patch or two of skin, but he would recover. He would recover, locked in the room Ted Huxley had vacated for Patterson, until either Callahan or fate released him.

That took care of almost everything, then, Harry decided. Only one thing left to do.

He pulled the trigger on the Mac the same moment he brought the barrel up across the top of the telephone pole. The electric wires leading to the townhouse were ripped apart with a bright white ball of

light, a resounding boom and a display of sparks.

The metal shutters didn't open so that someone could examine the damage. It wouldn't do any good. All the lights were out on the street, and now all the lights were out inside.

One of Dr. Carr's last two men picked his way past the first-floor furniture to the basement door. He pulled it open and ran down the steps quickly. He felt his way to the emergency generator and switched it on. He heard the power surge above him, and watched the lights flicker on in the cellar.

He turned around and almost bumped into Harry Callahan. The Inspector slammed the back of the Mac across the man's head.

As the man crumpled, the cop concerned himself with other things. Once he had surmounted the fence and its electrified topping, it was easy to get inside. The cellar windows weren't barred or shuttered, so he just dropped in. Everything was up from there.

He stuck his head out into the kitchen. It was a gigantic affair, covering almost half of the first floor. There were two huge overhead fans, and a wall covered with gas-operated ovens and stoves. Along the opposite wall was shelving which contained five-pound cans of food stuffs and fifty-pound bags of basics, like sugar and flour.

The entire area was devoid of life, but Callahan scanned all the corners and the ceiling for any signs of surveillance equipment. But, just as outside, he could see nothing of the kind.

Next door was a dining area, set up to feed at least two dozen people. It, too, was empty. Between the two rooms was a simple stairway and a small elevator. Harry looked up the steps, but saw no one. He moved up quickly, stopping at the doorway at the top.

He paused at the obstruction for several minutes, listening for any hint of activity on the other side. There was none. He turned the knob and pushed. The portal swung open on a finely appointed reception area.

It was as if he had stepped into the office of any "Fortune 500" company in the financial district. There was a secretary's desk littered with a typewriter, phone, blotter, and all the accoutrements. Opposite the desk were a comfortable sofa and a coffee table complete with copies of *Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, Forbes, Byte Magazine,* and *McCall's.*

Harry visually examined the area minutely. There were still no cameras or bugs that he could see. From there, he went into the adjoining rooms. Each was a professionally furnished office with absolutely no individuality. Each contained the same things:

someone's idea of a stripped-down, basic businessman's environment.

Only there were no papers in the racks, no files in the cabinets and nothing in the drawers. Harry was beginning to think Lee had lied to him until he remembered the man in the cellar.

That was not a custodian he had knocked out. He had neither the look nor the build. He was dressed and groomed too well, and he moved too smoothly. He may have missed the boat, but he was barking up the right tree.

There was only one story left. The one without windows. He went to the door leading up to the third floor, but it was locked. He considered blasting it open, but thought better of it.

Stairs or elevator—if anyone was up there, they'd be warned of his coming. Either way, he'd have to go through a small opening to get in. Either way, he wasn't going to retreat no matter what happened.

Harry went to the elevator and pressed the button. The doors immediately opened. He stepped inside and touched the square which read 3. It was one of those sensor buttons, the kind that pick up something about the skin's heat to make things work. Harry saw that there was nothing inside the box but the sensor board.

He didn't feel the elevator rising. One moment the plain doors closed on the bureaucratic second floor. A few seconds later, the doors opened on Dr. Carr's lab.

It took up the entire story. The ceiling was ten feet above the plain tile flooring. The entire right wall was taken up with a computer. A keyboard stood in the middle like a church organ console.

The far wall was covered with racks of microfilm and memory disks. That was where all the information that only the computer could read was stored. Harry was sure that only Dr. Carr knew the language the computer worked in.

The left wall was lined with lab stations—counter space where more than a dozen scientists could work. Each station was outfitted with a small computer terminal—no bigger than an IBM Selectric typewriter—a phone, a calculator with paper readout, and a gas hookup for the burners.

These burners were also spaced along the two rows of marble-topped tables which were littered with every scientific apparatus imaginable.

It was every mad scientist's laboratory in every movie ever made, but with a sharp nineteen-eighties edge. Unlike the cinematic labs, this one was believable. The beakers and test tubes were backed up by technology—machines that calibrated and tested results to degrees

never before possible.

Three more things made the lab all too realistic. In the middle of the room stood the man Harry had hit in the cellar. Next to him was a medium-sized man with gray hair. And in front of him was Denise Patterson.

Harry's fingers tensed on the Mac. His free hand instinctively moved toward the Magnum. He stopped when he noticed that five of the six hands in front of him were empty. Only the gray-haired man's right hand was full. In it was a pistol syringe.

That's all it was. The small injection system that eliminated the need for needles.

That one little piece of equipment was more powerful than all of Harry's guns and Harry's bullets. Because Callahan didn't know what the syringe was loaded with. All he knew was that the man with the injector was right behind Denise Patterson.

"Come in, Inspector," the gray-haired man called.

"Took you long enough to get here," the younger man laughed.

Callahan wondered about his own sanity. Maybe the whole thing was a trap, but that didn't affect how hard he had punched the guard downstairs. He had punched a lot of men in his time, and he knew his own strength. There was no possible way the man could be standing there, short of cloning.

Harry had come close with that assumption. "Otto," the gray-haired man said. "Go get your brother." He looked at the cop with a slight smile. "I'm sure Mr. Callahan and I will get along fine."

When the man had left the room, opening the exit door behind them with a key, the gray-haired man explained. "The Klein twins; Otto and Cliff. They are the last ones you left me."

"I didn't want to kill anyone," Harry said, his voice echoing in the cavernous workshop.

"Didn't you?" the man said. "I've dedicated my life to studying how humans kill one another. I think you did, Inspector. I think you did."

Harry shrugged away the accusation. "Are you all right?" he asked Patterson. There was a suspenseful pause before she answered. "Yes," she finally said with tired, sad inflections. "I'm fine," she stressed, unable to keep from chastising him with her tone—as if she had added an inaudible "of course."

"You see?" gray-hair said. "Now why don't you put down your weapons?"

Harry stood where he was, the Mac still held up. "You're Doctor

Carr?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What's in the syringe?"

Carr looked to Patterson. "Tell him. It is your achievement as much as mine."

She didn't look back at him. "We call it 'Cellulene,' Harry. It's the next evolutionary step up in the advance."

"What does that mean?" Callahan asked, with annoyance.

"It means it can do more than constrict blood vessels," the doctor replied. "It can crush cells." He let that information sink in before continuing. "Put down your weapons, Inspector." This time it was a command.

Callahan didn't budge. He was beginning to wonder whether a world without Patterson would be that bad.

"Do what he says," the young woman said tightly, just a touch of pleading in her voice. "If he even releases it into the air, it could affect us all."

Harry slowly put down the Mac on the table next to him. He pulled out the Browning and laid it next to the Mac. Finally, out came the .44. It felt good in his hand.

"Remember," Carr warned. "All I have to do is touch this button . . ." Callahan saw the trigger stub on the syringe clearly. His Magnum joined the other guns on the table.

"Everything pales in the face of this, doesn't it?" Carr said, proudly. Just then, the Kleins came back in—Cliff rubbing a long purple bruise across his face. Harry wouldn't mistake the two again. Otto was the one without the ugly swelling.

"Take his weapons," Carr instructed. "But take no chances." The twins pulled out their matching Walthers and approached from opposite sides of the room. They collected Harry's armory without incident. Carr kept Callahan entertained while they did.

"All your accomplishments, all your successes, all your victories amount to nothing, Inspector. You've fought for nothing."

"I fight for justice," Harry corrected, without passion.

Carr didn't laugh. He took the statement seriously. In fact, he was challenged by it. "You're not Superman, Inspector," he reminded him. "You don't have super powers to support your fight for truth and the American way. Although," Carr mused, tongue in cheek, "at times you seem to."

Harry had been right about the scientist. He didn't give a shit about people. All the men who had died for the Program were so many comic book characters to Carr.

"Besides," the man concluded, holding up the syringe. "This is now the American way." The Kleins returned to his side. The doctor took the Magnum in his free hand. "You two split up the rest," he suggested. Cliff grabbed the Mac. He wanted the firepower. Otto hefted the Browning. Both put their lesser-powered peashooters away.

"Where is everyone else?" Harry asked, not wanting to handle "what now" right away.

"The same place Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lee is," Carr answered. "Gone. Either moved onto other projects, quit, transferred to another unit, or six feet underground." The doctor considered the military man's fate. "Poor Huck. He liked being rich more than he liked being a soldier. And, as military liaison to the Program, he could be rich."

"He liked being alive more than he liked being rich," Harry revealed.

Carr nodded. "It is as I suspected. I don't want to know what you did to make him talk, but I hope he's dead."

"Almost everyone else is secondary to the main research," Patterson explained clearly. "There were the cooks, custodians, clerical help, and security."

"But no one assisted me personally except Ms. Patterson," Carr interrupted. "So, rightfully, she shares in the responsibility of the discovery. If she accepts it."

It was a big "if," the way he said it. Harry felt the suddenly growing tension clear across the room.

"Was it worth it?" he demanded. He wanted to stall for time against what was obviously a quickly approaching confrontation, but he actually wanted to know, as well.

Carr looked at him blankly. "Was *what* worth it?" The scientist actually didn't know exactly what Callahan was referring to.

"The deaths," Harry ground through his clenched teeth.

Carr scoffed, turning his head away as if Harry had said the most ridiculous thing he had ever heard. "Was World War Two 'worth it'?" he mocked. "A lot of people died in that. But, oh, no, it would be much better if we had let Hitler take over the world rather than kill anybody."

"Hitler didn't push little girls in front of trains to cover his ass," Harry stated with a scowl.

Carr was stopped by that for a second, but then he came back stronger than ever. “He would have if he had had to,” he boomed.

“Congratulations,” Harry smiled slightly. “Hitler.”

The look of triumph on the Kleins’ and Carr’s face disappeared. The twins responded by looking as if they were ready to eradicate him then and there, but the doctor maintained his civilized exterior.

“You don’t understand,” he said, always the last defense of a wrong man. “We’re living in a world that could end with the push of a button. With that kind of power at almost anyone’s fingertips, what will keep them from pressing down?”

Harry was fed up with the arguments, the rationalizations, and the misguided dreaming. “Where will the insanity end?” he asked Patterson again.

“Here,” Carr answered, holding up the syringe. “We can make enough Cellulene to keep the other powers in line. Picture it, Inspector. The cells imploding in a chain reaction. The bodies will practically disintegrate before your eyes. All that stands between us and mass production is a final test.”

The last sentence hung in the air like the sword of Damocles. Harry suddenly knew what he was doing there, and why it was so easy to get in.

“A final test,” he echoed.

“A final test,” Carr repeated. “Of Cellulene and of loyalty.” The latter word was directed at Patterson. “To see whether an individual is to be served, or the world.”

He handed the syringe to the woman.

She looked at him for only a second as she took it, then steeled herself for the long walk to Harry. Cliff Klein accompanied her, his expression just daring Callahan to try anything.

Only her outfit had changed, Harry saw. She was wearing the suit he had first seen her in at the hospital. They had just missed each other throughout the operation, but neither could deny the mutual attraction. But both had a grander mistress to serve. Patterson wanted to save the world. Callahan didn’t want innocents to have died in vain.

“He didn’t kill me,” she told him as she approached.

“He knew the only thing that would keep me from killing him was you,” Harry told her back.

She stopped five feet in front of him. Callahan didn’t move. Klein was waiting for any excuse to kill the cop his way.

“It’s the only way to test your faith, your devotion,” Carr called.

“It’s the only way he can own you,” Harry said. “You haven’t done anything wrong until now.”

“It’s his way or this country!” the doctor boomed immediately. “He only wants to save himself!”

“He’s right,” Harry agreed.

Patterson stepped forward, pushed the syringe against Harry’s shoulder, and pressed the trigger.

CHAPTER

Sixteen

Harry Callahan heard the syringe's sound and felt the liquid clamp onto his musculature.

Denise Patterson dropped the syringe and half-ran, half-fell to the table behind Harry's right shoulder. She coughed and choked, trying not to cry and not to throw up.

"I'm sorry," she gasped, her head down.

"There was nothing else you could have done," Harry told her.

"Excellent!" Carr boomed, overriding them both. He came striding up, refreshed, with Otto Klein right behind. "You made the right choice," he told the woman. To Harry, it was the first major sign that she had just made a big mistake.

"Wait for us downstairs, if you would," he advised her. "I don't think you'll want to see what happens next."

Instead of racing out, sobbing, Patterson gathered herself together and stood leaning on the table. "Excuse me, sir. I—I could take notes on the results if you wish."

Harry looked at her incredulously. She scrupulously avoided his gaze.

"That won't be necessary," Carr said, then added dryly, "I really don't think you could handle this case objectively."

Then Patterson turned and walked away without another word. Quickly. The doctor waited until the exit door had closed behind her before returning his attention to Harry. He stood between the slavishly grinning Klein twins who still leveled their guns at Callahan's middle.

"So, Inspector," he gloated. "It seems that everything you came to depend upon has betrayed you. The woman, your luck . . ." He held up the Magnum. "Even your gun."

Harry couldn't keep himself from stepping forward, his hands squeezing into fists.

"You would still die before reaching me," Carr promised, glancing at the bloodthirsty twins. "But at least, your death has a moral," he continued. "Whoever has the best weapon, wins. Now America has the best weapon."

The next sentence was the most difficult thing Callahan had ever had to say. “How long do I have?”

Carr chuckled. “As long as it takes for you to do something stupid,” he revealed, “or, ten seconds after I inject you with this.” He reached into his lab coat’s left pocket and took out another syringe pistol. When he saw the look on the cop’s face, he broke out in loud laughter. The Kleins couldn’t help but laugh along.

“Why, Inspector,” he gushed. “You don’t think I’d trust that woman with the real Cellulene, do you?”

All their mirth was cut off when the lights went out.

The room was suddenly, inexplicably plunged into darkness. Harry immediately fell onto his back. The space right above him was illuminated by the flashes of the Browning, the Magnum, and the Mac all going off at once—filling the air with bullets where he had just been.

Harry crab-crawled on his back with his arms, shoulders, hips and legs, slipping around the base of a table to his right, as the three remaining Program men scurried and shouted like frightened animals. That didn’t make them any less dangerous.

Carr’s strategy had driven him right into a corner. He had forced Patterson to reject all of her humanistic precepts, while not trusting her. He had spared Harry’s life, he thought temporarily, just in case the woman turned on him. He had it covered from every angle except the one where Patterson kills Harry and then comes back for him.

Living up to his survival instincts, Carr went right for the lights.

“They don’t work!” he yelled.

“She must’ve turned off the emergency generator!” one of the Kleins yelled back.

“I’ll get her!” the other shouted, kicking open the door.

Callahan didn’t need to be subtle. With the lights out, they were almost even, armed or not. And the muzzle flashes betrayed where they were, not him. He started tipping over every scientific setup he could get his hands on.

Added to the cacophony of shouts, running, and gunfire was the crash of delicate medical supplies. Carr howled in agony as he heard three years’ work being devastated.

“Stop it, stop it!” he shouted. “That won’t help you!”

The remaining Klein did him one better. He fired the Mac in the direction of every falling experiment. That told Callahan it was Cliff who was still in the room. The twin stood rooted near the side wall,

plastering the already destroyed areas with parabellum ammo. He kept firing until the thirty-two-round magazine was spent. Then Harry scrambled to his feet and came at Cliff from between two tables.

While the twin was fumbling for his Astra, the cop downed him with a flying tackle. As they toppled over, Harry pushed the back of the man's head against the edge of the wall-long counter.

A sickening crack echoed through the lab as Carr fired at the spot where they had gone down, smashing open a computer terminal and calculator. Kneeling beneath the slugs, Harry pulled the automatic out of the dazed man's holster, squeezed Klein's chin to open his mouth, stuck the barrel inside, and pulled the trigger.

He jumped up without watching a hunk of brain pop out of the top of the twin's skull like a champagne cork.

"Stay back!" Carr screamed. "I've got the Cellulene! Stay back, you hear me?"

Harry froze for only a second. He was sure the doctor wouldn't use it unless he could inject it into the cop, and Callahan didn't intend that to happen. He kept moving toward the scientist.

"That's it," Harry said without rancor. "You've lost."

"Then this nation has lost!" Carr cried.

"Bullshit!" Harry cut him off. "Cellulene is just another way to die, and we have enough of those ways already."

"No," the doctor declared, his head shaking. "No. You can't do this. You must let me go!"

"Straight to hell," Harry said, standing ten feet in front of him. He emptied the Astra into Carr's face.

The doctor slammed back against his computer, both arms high in the air—the .44 in one hand, the syringe pistol in the other. Harry dropped the gun and leaped forward, pinning the dead doctor there. With one hand, he grabbed the syringe. With the other, he kept the dying fingers from tightening.

With a fast, sharp tug, he wrenched the injector pistol with its deadly contents out of Carr's hand. Released, the doctor fell forward across his keyboard. The computer started going wild.

Harry fell back, both elbows on the table behind him. His knees were weak and he felt a thick mask of sweat covering his face. The salt from the perspiration slipped under his bandages and stung his wounds anew.

"It's over," he said to himself.

The stairway door opened behind him. The silhouetted shape there

was obviously Patterson. “Harry?” she called.

“Here,” he told her, getting up. He retrieved his Magnum, filled it with a speed loader and went over.

“I knew,” she said simply, explaining why she had cut the power.

“I guessed,” Harry replied. “Where’s Otto?”

Her relieved expression changed to one of confusion. “I don’t know,” she said. “I didn’t see him.”

“He must have got out while he could,” Harry figured. “He won’t go far,” he vowed.

The other Klein didn’t. As Patterson and Harry came around the corner of the second floor, Otto ran out from an office, firing both the Browning and the Astra as he went—one in each hand.

“Die!” he screamed hysterically. “Die, die, damn it!”

Harry was back on the police obstacle firing range, seeing in his mind’s eye a leaping target. He pushed Patterson behind the stairway door and fired the .44 at the same time.

The Magnum was like an extension of his arm, and all he had to do was point to make it work. The lead ripped open Otto’s stomach as his side slammed against the elevator door. He grimaced in pain, dropped the guns and fell face first.

Harry was turning back to help Patterson up when they both heard the glass breaking.

They stared at Otto Klein in disbelief. The wounded twin turned over, trying to rub off a stain on his jacket front. And it wasn’t blood.

“Cellulene,” Denise hissed.

“I was going to sell it,” the dying Klein confessed. “I am—”

That’s as far as Harry let him get. He destroyed Otto’s face with another shot from the Magnum. The featureless body flopped back on the blood-soaked carpet.

Patterson was already halfway down the stairs. “Run,” she breathlessly panted. “Run. That’s your only hope.”

Harry vaulted down half the flight, pulling back the .44’s hammer. He pointed the barrel at the back of her head. “Don’t move or I’ll shoot,” he yelled. The conviction in his voice made the cliché stick.

“Harry,” she pleaded, whirling around. “It spreads. It moves on the air currents. Our only chance is to get away.”

“How do you stop it?” he demanded, the barrel still centered on her sweating, terrified visage.

“You can’t!” she screamed.

Harry shot her in the arm. She flew back down the last three steps, lost her footing on the landing, and sat hard against the wall. She stared in shock at her arm, amazed that it wasn’t blown off.

If Harry had wanted to amputate it, it would have been flopping on the floor. He had fired so that the slug would dig a shallow channel in her flesh. It was a desperate chance, but the only one he had left.

“You made it,” he accused her, almost insanely, his eyes wild. “Now how can you stop it?”

The pain, the realization that he would kill her if she couldn’t come up with an answer, and her own guilt cleared her hysteria. She was drifting into shock, but she suddenly remembered a way. A way no army could achieve once the germ had spread among them.

“Immolation,” she breathed, “by fire. This entire place has to be immolated within three minutes or the germ will spread too thin. It has to be burned while still condensed.”

When she looked up, Harry had already gone. She heard his voice coming from the lab.

“Run,” he said. “Run and keep running. And pray you never have reason to see me again.”

Harry turned on all the gas jets in the laboratory. He ran over to Carr’s corpse and injected it with the pistol syringe. He ran down the stairs and into the kitchen. Denise Patterson was already gone.

He turned on all the ovens and stoves there, after blowing out the pilot lights. He ripped open two bags of flour and turned on the overhead fans. He grabbed the tops of two more cloth sacks of flour and dragged them into the cellar.

Dragging them over to the air-conditioning system, he turned it all the way up and dumped all one hundred pounds of the white powdery stuff inside.

Shaking, his entire body stinging from the reopened wounds and the armor of sweat, Callahan dragged himself outside. He ran, fell, rolled, and crawled on his hands and knees to the front gate.

He pulled himself upright on the chain-link fence and pulled out the Magnum. The shot he used to break the lock nearly knocked him over. He threw the gates wide and staggered across the street, tripping on the curb.

Harry climbed up onto the brick wall of the slum there, his breath coming in tortured, jabbing gulps. He spun around to face the Program building. He leaned back against the bricks, his feet wide.

The gun came up in both hands, but his eyes wouldn't focus. A rainbow-streaked haze drifted across his vision. In it, the building seemed to waver and come alive. It was breathing. It was ripping itself out of its foundation.

Callahan shouted his rage, the sound a bestial cry in the condemned neighborhood. The barrel stopped, centered between two metal slats. The cannon boomed.

The bullet went through the glass and slashed across the very top of the metal slat. The friction made a single spark.

The spark ignited the highly volatile flour which the overhead fans and air conditioning had spread into a fine powder throughout the building. The flour detonated the gas. The gas engulfed everything else.

The kitchen exploded out. The lab exploded up. Everything was engulfed in a ball of orange flame which broiled the entire interior at once.

Harry was slammed into unconsciousness by the conflagration. He didn't see the roofless building collapse upon itself, its debris burnt up before it hit the ground.

All he saw was a charred, half-story ruin when he woke up, hours later. He felt his face. His eyelashes and brows were crumbling ash.

But gone, too, were the terror and confusion. They had been purged by the fireball, as surely as the Cellulene had been dissolved.

Harry stood. It still wasn't easy, but it was worth it. Beyond the destroyed building, the sun had come up.

It was January one, the first day of the New Year.

The year 1984.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DANE HARTMAN was a Warner Books imprint pseudonym used by two American novelists, Ric Meyers and Leslie Alan Horvitz. "Hartman" was credited as the author of the Dirty Harry action series based on the “Dirty” Harry Callahan character of the popular 1970’s and 1980’s films starring Clint Eastwood.

Following the release of the third Dirty Harry movie, The Enforcer, in 1976, Clint Eastwood made it clear that he did not intend to make any more Dirty Harry movies. In 1981, Warner Books (the publishing arm of Warner Bros., which made the films) began publishing a number of men’s adventure series under its now-defunct "Men of Action" line. One such series features the further adventures of Inspector Harry Callahan. The series was brought to an end when Eastwood decided to direct, produce, and star in a fourth Dirty Harry movie, Sudden Impact, which was released in December 1983.

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